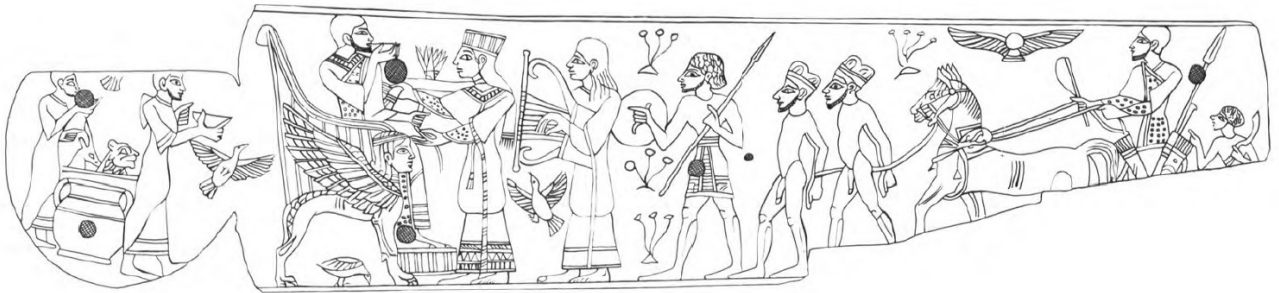


The Book of Shmu'el

A new translation



William Whitt

First published in 2018
by The Middle Coast Press
Highland Park, Illinois

Typeset in pdfLaTeX by The Middle Coast Press
Printed and bound by Edition One Books, Berkeley, California

All rights reserved
© 2018 by William Whitt

ISBN 978-0-692-18637-4

COVER ILLUSTRATION: The Megiddo Ivories, plate 4, no. 2b. Courtesy of the
Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

*This translation of the Book of Shmu'el is inscribed with love
to my mother, Charlotte Whitt, and my father, David Whitt.*

Table of contents

List of figures	iv
Translator's note to the reader	vi
The Book of Shmu'el	1
Notes and comments on the translation	141
Index of characters	187
The geography of Shmu'el	197
Maps of principal locations	205

List of figures

All figures courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

Figure 1. The Megiddo Ivories, plate 32, no. 159c. “And then the battle let loose!”	10
Figure 2. The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 2, no. 1c. “Winged Sphinxes...”	11
Figure 3. The Megiddo Ivories, plate 32, no. 160c. “Shmu’el brought them into the shrine’s meeting hall and gave them a place at the head of the celebrants.”	21
Figure 4. The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 4, no. 2b (detail). “Whenever God’s bad spirit would affect Sha’ul, Dawid would take the lyre and begin playing...”	39
Figure 5. The Megiddo Ivories, plate 22, no. 125b (detail). “Whenever a cougar—or even a bear—would come and take one of the sheep from the flock...”	42
Figure 6. The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 10, no. 44c. “What I see are divine beings rising from the earth.”	69
Figure 7. The Megiddo Ivories, plate 33, no. 161c (reverse image). “Dawid and his men, meanwhile, were bringing up the rear with Akish.”	71
Figure 8. The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 22, no. 125b (detail). “A group of archers, each firing from his bow, found him with their arrows and gravely wounded him.”	75
Figure 9. The Megiddo Ivories, plate 16, no. 107e (detail). “The gazelle up on your hills, O Yisra’el, lies a corpse...”	77
Figure 10. The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 32, no. 160c (reverse image). “Dawid put on a feast for Abner and the men who were with him.”	82
Figure 11. The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 2, no. 1c (reverse image). “Winged Sphinxes...”	88

List of figures (continued)

Figure 12. The Megiddo Ivories, plate 4, no. 2b (detail). “Dawid captured from him seventeen hundred cavalry and twenty thousand infantry.”	93
Figure 13. The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 32, no. 162c. “You will work the fields for him—you and your sons and your slaves—and bring their produce to him. . . .”	95
Figure 14. The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 38, no. 173c. “When Tamar arrived at her half-brother Amnon’s house. . . .”	102
Figure 15. The Megiddo Ivories, plate 33, no. 161c. “Abshalom crossed over the Yarden with all the Yisra’elite forces.”	117
Figure 16. The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 32, no 159c (reverse image). “The Yisra’elite forces were soundly thrashed by the men loyal to Dawid.”	118
Figure 17. The Megiddo Ivories, plate 22, no. 125b (detail). “All the Yisra’elites turned away from Dawid and followed Sheba Bikriyson.”	126
Figure 18. The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 7, no. 22b. “He mounts a sphinx and flies off. . . .”	131

Translator's note to the reader

"Whoever wishes to translate, and purposes to render each word literally, and at the same time adhere slavishly to the order of the words and sentences in the original, will meet with much difficulty; his rendering will be faulty and untrustworthy. This is not the right method. The translator should first try to grasp the sense of the subject thoroughly, and then state the theme with perfect clearness in the other language. This, however, cannot be done without changing the order of words, putting many words for one word, or *vice versa*, and adding or taking away words, so that the subject be perfectly intelligible in the language into which he translates."

Moses Maimonides, Letter to His Translator Samuel ibn Tibbon
Cited from *Miscellany of Hebrew Literature*, vol. 1 (1872), p. 222

"First read, then, my Samuel and Kings; mine, I say, mine. For whatever by diligent translation and by anxious emendation we have learnt and made our own, is ours. And when you understand that whereof you were before ignorant, either, if you are grateful, reckon me a translator, or, if ungrateful, a paraphraser, albeit I am not in the least conscious of having deviated from the Hebrew original."

Jerome, Preface to the Vulgate Version of the Books of Samuel and Kings
Cited from *Jerome: The Principal Works of St. Jerome* (1892), p. 770

This translation has two purposes. One is to demonstrate how the Hebrew of Tanakh is best translated—that is to say, into a vigorous and dynamic English that recreates for the English-speaking reader an equivalent experience to that of the reader of the original Hebrew. For the authors of Tanakh, Hebrew was a living language—the language of their everyday speech. A faithful translation into English, then, should bring over the Hebrew into the English that is spoken and written by English speakers of today. The second purpose of this translation is to bring to life the stories of Samuel, Saul, and David (or, as I refer to them in my translation, Shmu'el, Sha'ul and Dawid) so that their literary merit may more easily be appreciated by those who don't read ancient Hebrew. These stories are among the outstanding examples of literature from the ancient world, and are worthy of being read and appreciated on their own as literature, regardless of whether one views them as scripture.

In general, translators strive for two things: fidelity (how accurately a translation renders the meaning of the source text) and fluency (how much a translation appears to native speakers of the target language to have been written originally in that language). These are not necessarily mutually exclusive goals, and the really outstanding translations are those that manage to achieve both.

The linguist and Bible translator Eugene Nida expressed the ideas of fidelity and fluency in terms of “formal” equivalence and “dynamic” (or “functional”) equivalence. Although Nida was tremendously influential, and although he personally advocated for fluent approaches to Bible translation that employ dynamic equivalence, it is nevertheless the case that most modern-day translations of the Bible have a strong bias toward fidelity and formal equivalence. This bias toward formal equivalence is almost certainly because nearly all Bible translators approach the text as scripture, and so—consciously or unconsciously—are uncomfortable with deviating much from the literal meaning of the text. (There is just one English-language Bible translation of recent times, in my opinion, that succeeds in achieving the twin goals of fluency and fidelity—the New Living Translation published by Tyndale House in 2007.)

In this translation, I have put special effort into trying to convey the author’s meaning in natural English—in particular, I have written what I imagine the author would have written had he been a modern-day native English speaker. My priorities were always to try to express the ideas in the text in the most natural way in English, and at the same time to capture the energy and rhythm of the original.

Hebrew is very different from English—its vocabulary is limited, it uses particles and adverbs more sparingly, its sentence structure and verb tenses are simpler, and the logical connections between successive sentences or actions are typically implied and rarely expressed as explicitly as in English. Translations which carry over these features into English—as literal translations inevitably must—produce a wooden, lifeless prose that fails to do justice to the energy and vibrancy of the original Hebrew. Translating the Hebrew into natural English has required me to break significantly from literal renderings in nearly every sentence—I have frequently added particles and adverbs, inserted logical connections between sentences, omitted words that are superfluous in translation, introduced word variety where it

was lacking, altered verb tenses and pronoun usage, changed word order, and, on occasion, added short phrases when needed to produce natural English. Following Maimonides' advice to his own translator quoted above, I have relied on my understanding of the story and of what I believed to be the author's intent to guide my many departures from the literal text. My goal was always to be faithful to the ideas the author was expressing in Hebrew—but to express those ideas in English in the most natural way.

I have chosen to translate the Book of Shmu'el because its principal author is, in my opinion, the most lively and dynamic writer of ancient Hebrew prose known to us, thus making Shmu'el the best text in Tanakh to test out my more "fluent" approach to translation. More than any other author of Tanakh, the author of Shmu'el made a special effort to capture the everyday speech and idioms of what was then a living language. This makes the author's writing all the more striking and vivid—when reading Shmu'el, one feels present at the scene in a way that one never feels in reading other parts of Tanakh. Moreover, the author is an outstanding story teller, thanks to three things: his understanding of human psychology (which is unmatched elsewhere in Tanakh); his mastery of dialogue and the interactions between his characters, which still ring true today, two-and-a-half millennia after they were composed; and his knack for highlighting small details in ways that heighten the drama or emotion of a scene. No English translation that I am aware of has done justice to the dynamism and power of the Hebrew of our author; it is my sincere hope that I have been more successful than others with the translation presented here.

**

In the Christian Bible, Samuel (or what I call Shmu'el) is divided into two books. Originally, however, Shmu'el was a single work and recorded on a single scroll, and this is in fact the form of the book in the Masoretic manuscripts, which are the most authoritative versions of the text, and which scholars view as the most accurate overall reflection of the original text. Shmu'el's division into two halves likely was the result of its translation into Greek in the third and second centuries BCE (a translation known as the Septuagint), when the resulting Greek text was too long to fit into a single scroll. In

contrast to most translations today, my translation presents Shmu'el as a single undivided work, in keeping with the original composition and consistent with the text as passed down to us by the Masoretes.

A second place where I make a major departure from all other present-day English translations is that my translation does not follow the familiar chapter divisions, which are based on a scheme introduced by Archbishop of Canterbury Stephen Langton in the thirteenth century CE. Rather, my translation follows the division of the text into literary units—or *parashot*—as preserved in the Masoretic traditions. We know that the *parashot* in the Masoretic text reflect very ancient traditions, for they agree closely with textual divisions found in the Biblical texts that were recovered from Qumran and that date to the second and first centuries BCE. Moreover, the *parashot* are marked in an identical fashion in the Masoretic text and in the texts from Qumran—with half-line indentations used to indicate the beginning of smaller literary units and entirely blank lines used to indicate the beginning of major literary units. While the general agreement of the *parashot* in the texts from Qumran with the Masoretic text can be seen in numerous textual fragments from Qumran, it is most easily and convincingly seen in a simple visual comparison of the *parashot* in the Great Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) Scroll from Qumran and the Book of Yesha'yahu in the Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex.

Although the evidence from Qumran clearly demonstrates that the *parashot* have ancient roots, that is of little help in answering the questions of how old they are and whether they might have been part of the original composition. It is of course impossible to answer these questions definitively, but it is tempting to suppose that the ultimate source for many—or even most—of the *parashot* might indeed be the original composition itself. For, once the medieval chapter divisions are stripped from the text and the *parashot* highlighted, one is repeatedly struck by how the *parashot* contribute to and enhance the flow of the narrative. Even more, one is struck by the often beautiful literary effects achieved by the use of the *parashot* within dialogue (and, among authors of ancient Hebrew prose, the author of Shmu'el was without peer in his mastery of dialogue).

If the Masoretic *parashot* do have their roots in the original literary units of the text, then they may help us to understand the composition technique of our author (and of other authors of Tanakh). One of the

fundamental challenges faced by the authors of Tanakh was how best to fashion a coherent narrative from the multiple, often conflicting, traditions and stories that had grown up around their chosen subject matter. In many instances, the solution that the principal author of Shmu'el and the other authors and editors of Tanakh came to was keep the material from different traditions separate, but to create a vignette or short literary unit around each block of material they wished to preserve, and then to stitch together their narrative by joining up the vignettes with one another. This style of composition, with the *parashot* serving as the building blocks of the narrative, enabled the authors to combine disparate traditions while still preserving the integrity of their sources, even when those sources didn't fully agree with one another. To cite just one example, it is possible to see this practice at work in the intertwined stories of how Dawid entered Sha'ul's service, and of how Dawid killed Golyath, presented below on pages 38-44. Scholars have long argued that the text combines two or more originally independent traditions here. Although most of the *parashot* in this section of the book seem to be used for literary effects, other *parashot* very clearly are used to mark off blocks of material that were originally independent.

Because the *parashot* are sometimes employed in the text in ways that modern-day readers do not expect, it is worth including here a few comments on their usage. There are two types of *parashot*—the *parashah petuhah* (or “open *parashah*”) typically marks the beginning of a major literary unit, while the *parashah setumah* (or “closed *parashah*”) typically marks the beginning of a smaller literary unit. Both the *parashah petuhah* and the *parashah setumah* are used not only to indicate a change of subject matter or change of scene, but they are also frequently used in two other ways: to draw attention to important speeches, and to alter the pace of the narrative for dramatic effect. In addition, the *parashah setumah* (but not the *parashah petuhah*) has a number of other quite specific uses: to separate items in a list, to separate lines of poems and songs, and as a simple mark of punctuation (in particular, functioning as colons and ellipses do in English).

In my translation, I have indicated the *parashot petuhot* with a triple line break and a double asterisk (**), while I have indicated the *parashot setumot* with a single line break and an em-dash (—). To ensure that I consistently and accurately represented the *parashot petuhot* and

parashot setumot in my translation, I consulted a photofacsimile of the Aleppo Codex (which is the most authoritative Masoretic manuscript for the Book of Shmu'el) to determine each and every place in the text that was marked with a *parashah*, and also to determine whether the *parashah* was “open” or “closed.”

[/https://
archive.org/
details/
Aleppo_Codex](https://archive.org/details/Aleppo_Codex)

As a convenience to readers, I have noted the major Masoretic literary units (the *parashot petuhot*) and the familiar chapter divisions of the Christian Bible in the margins of my translation. Although the Masoretes did not number the *parashot petuhot*, I have taken the liberty of numbering them here in order to make it easier for readers to keep track of their place in the text, and to move back and forth between the text and the notes and comments. In the margins of the translation, I indicate the *parashot petuhot* with the prefix “P” followed by a number (P1, P2, P3, etc.), while I have indicated the more familiar chapter divisions by placing book and chapter number within brackets—for example, [1.5] denotes 1 Samuel 5. I have also used the margins to indicate places in the text that are discussed in the notes and comments that follow the translation; for each *parashah*, these are marked in lowercase letters—a, b, c, etc.—and are hyper-linked in the pdf version of this book.

**

Shortly after I began this translation, my wife and I—looking for something to entertain ourselves with on a particularly cold and grey spring day—made a visit to the Oriental Institute Museum at the University of Chicago. Among the many wonderful things in the museum’s collections are the Megiddo Ivories. Upon seeing these in the nearly empty museum, all but forgotten behind their viewing cases, it occurred to me that they would be the perfect illustrations to accompany my translation of Shmu’el. Created towards the end of the Late Bronze age (thirteenth century BCE), the ivories pre-date by roughly two hundred years the period in which the stories of Shmu’el, Sha’ul, and Dawid are set—not that far removed in time, when viewed from our twenty-first century vantage point, from the earliest days of the kingdoms of Yisra’el and Yehudah. Moreover, the ivories come from Tel Megiddo, which was a prominent town in ancient Yisra’el and which lies fewer than one hundred miles from where nearly all

the events in the book of Shmu'el take place. Finally, these ivories represent some of the best visual depictions of royal life in the ancient Levant near the beginning of the first millennium BCE—just as the Book of Shmu'el provides us with some of the best written depictions of royal life in the ancient kingdoms of Yisra'el and Yehudah.

A couple of words about names: in translating names of people and places, I have chosen to use transliterations that closely approximate how we believe Hebrew was pronounced. Thus, I write Shmu'el rather than Samuel, Sha'ul instead of Saul, and Dawid in place of David. Likewise, Yisra'el and Yehudah replace Israel and Judah. This grew out of my desire to help readers see familiar material in new ways. I wanted to break any preconceptions readers might bring to the text and help them engage with the text from a fresh vantage point. One of the best ways to do this, I thought, was to replace the familiar with the unfamiliar when there was good justification for doing so.

And so, in the spirit of Jerome's preface to the Books of Samuel and Kings, I ask that you evaluate this translation on the same terms by which Jerome asked to be evaluated: if after reading this translation "you understand that whereof you were before ignorant, either, if you are grateful, reckon me a translator, or, if ungrateful, a paraphraser." Regardless, however, you may be assured that I too—like Jerome—"am not in the least conscious of having deviated from the Hebrew original."

The Book of Shmu'el

THERE ONCE WAS A MAN from Haramathayim Tsophim, in the Ephrayim hill country, by the name of Elqanah Yerohamsson; he was the grandson of Elihu Tohusson and was descended from the family of Tsuph the Ephrathite. He had two wives—one named Hannah, and the other named Peninah. Now Peninah had children, whereas Hannah had none.

P1 [1.1]

a

Each year that man would go up from his town to worship and offer a sacrifice to Yahweh of Armies in Shiloh, where Eli's two sons—Hophni and Phinhas—were serving as priests to Yahweh. Now on the day when Elqanah would offer up his sacrifice, he would always give portions of the meat to his wife Peninah and to each of her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he especially loved Hannah—even though Yahweh had shut up her womb. Her condition would always make her exceedingly upset, to the point of causing her to shake all over, as it would hit her that Yahweh really had shut up her womb.

b

c

d

e

And so it would happen like this each year—every time she went up to Yahweh's temple, her condition would make her upset, and then she would cry and refuse to eat. Finally, her husband Elqanah said to her, "Hannah, why are you crying? Why won't you eat? Why is your heart so upset? Aren't I better to you than ten sons?"

Now when Hannah stood up after taking some food and drink there in Shiloh, it just so happened that Eli the priest was sitting on the bench beside one of the posts of the door to Yahweh's temple. Being anguished in spirit, she prayed to Yahweh, bawling and sobbing as she did so. Then she made a vow.

"Yahweh of Armies," she said, "if you take notice of your maid-servant's distress—if you remember me and don't forget me, your maid-servant—and if you give your maid-servant male offspring, then

f

I will dedicate him to Yahweh for his entire life, not even allowing a razor to touch his head.”

Now because she was making a great show of praying in front of Yahweh, Eli was watching her mouth closely. And because Hannah was talking to herself—only her lips were moving and her voice couldn’t be heard—Eli presumed she was drunk.

“How long are you going to be staggering around here drunk?” Eli asked. “Get hold of yourself and sober up!”

“No, my lord,” Hannah answered. “I’m only a woman who’s extremely upset—I haven’t had any wine or beer to drink. Rather, I was pouring out my feelings to Yahweh. Please don’t think your maid-servant is some good-for-nothing woman. It’s because my anguish and distress are so great that I was speaking like that.”

“Go safely on your way then,” Eli responded. “May the god of Yisra’el grant your request which you’ve asked of him.”

“And may your maid-servant find favor in your sight,” she replied. The woman then went on her way and ate, her bad mood having disappeared for good.

Getting an early start the next morning, Elqanah and his family prostrated themselves in worship in front of Yahweh one more time, and then returned to their home in Ramah. Shortly thereafter, Elqanah had intercourse with his wife Hannah, and Yahweh remembered her. And so it happened that around the turn of the year Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Shmu’el, for “I asked Yahweh for him.”

However, the next time that man Elqanah and his family went up to perform the annual sacrifice to Yahweh along with his annual vow, Hannah didn’t go with them. “Wait until the boy is weaned,” she told her husband. “Then I’ll take him. Then he can present himself to Yahweh and live there permanently.”

“Do what you think is right,” her husband Elqanah replied. “Stay here until you wean him. However, just let Yahweh make it happen soon!”

And so the woman stayed behind and nursed her son until she was ready to wean him.

Once she had weaned him, she took him with her—along with three young bulls, an *eyphah* of flour, and a jar of wine—and brought him to Yahweh’s temple at Shiloh, even though the boy was still just a

boy. They slaughtered one of the bulls and then brought the boy to Eli.

“Excuse me, my lord!” she said. “As you live, my lord—I’m the woman who was standing here with you praying to Yahweh. This is the boy that I prayed for—Yahweh really did grant the request that I made of him! Accordingly, I now give him over to Yahweh for his entire life, for he himself was gifted by Yahweh.”

And so they prostrated themselves there in worship to Yahweh.

Hannah prayed:

P1,1 [1.2] a

“My heart rejoices in Yahweh—
through him my powers rise higher
My words taunt my adversaries—
‘O, how I celebrate your victory!
None is holy as Yahweh—
truly, there is none except you—
there is no rock like our god!’

Don’t always go making presumptuous speeches—
nor let an insolent word escape your lips—
for Yahweh is an all-knowing god—
by him our actions are carefully measured!

The warriors’ bows lie broken—
while those brought low show their strength.
Those with plenty go begging for work—
whereas the hungry go without no longer.
Meanwhile the barren woman bears seven children—
the widow, many sons.

Yahweh puts to death and brings to life—
he sends down to She’ol and brings back up.
Yahweh impoverishes and makes wealthy—
he brings low but also lifts up.
He raises the poor up from the dirt—
from the trash-heap he lifts the needy—
to sit them down with princes—

to give them the seat of honor.
Indeed, to Yahweh belong the foundations of the earth—
upon them he has set the world!
He protects the paths trod by his faithful—
the wicked, however, perish in darkness—
truly, it is not by his own strength that a man prevails.

Let Yahweh destroy those who contend against him—
let him thunder against them from the skies!
May Yahweh judge the far corners of the earth—
and so give strength to his king—
and empower his anointed!"

**

P2 And so when Elqanah went home to Ramah, the boy stayed behind to serve Yahweh alongside Eli the priest.

Now Eli's sons were worthless fellows—they did not acknowledge Yahweh. The practice of the priests with the people was as follows:
a Whenever a man would make a sacrifice, the priest's attendant would come when they were boiling the meat, and with a three-pronged fork in his hand, he would stab it into the pot, vessel, cooker, or boiler. Anything that the fork brought up, the priest would take. In this fashion, they would act toward all the Yisra'elites who came there to Shiloh.

In addition, before they would burn the fat for the offering, the priest's attendant would come and say to the man making the offering, "Give me some meat for the priest to roast—he won't take any boiled meat from you; he wants only the raw." Should the man protest, "Look, they're going to be burning the fat today for the offering. After that, take for yourself whatever you want," then the attendant would reply, "No! Either you give it now, or I'll take it by force!" In this way, the attendants' wrong-doing was very great before Yahweh, for these men had treated Yahweh's grain offering with contempt.

Shmu'el at this time was serving before Yahweh—a priest's attendant who wore a linen priest's cloak. Each year his mother would make him a small tunic and bring it up to him when she went up with her husband to make the annual sacrifice. Eli would bless Elqanah and

his wife, saying “May Yahweh give you progeny from this woman in place of the gift that has been given over to Yahweh.” And then they would go home. b

Yahweh did indeed look after Hannah, and she became pregnant and bore three sons and two daughters; meanwhile the young man Shmu’el increased in stature with Yahweh.

When Eli was very old, he heard all about what his sons were doing to the Yisra’elites and how they were having sex with the women who serve in front of the Meeting Tent. He confronted them: “Why are you doing these things—these horrible deeds of yours that I am hearing about from everyone? No, my sons—the report I am hearing is not good at all—leading Yahweh’s people astray. If a man wrongs a man, god will intercede for him; but if a man wrongs Yahweh, who will intercede on his behalf?” P2,1

However, they didn’t listen to their father, for Yahweh was eager to kill them. But as for the priest’s boy Shmu’el, he kept on growing greater and better, both with Yahweh and with men.

**

Not long after this, a holy man came to Eli and said to him, “Thus Yahweh has said: ‘Did I not reveal myself to your ancestors when they were in Egypt serving Phar’oh and his line—choosing them from all the tribes of Yisra’el to be my priests, to go up on my altar, to make smoke offerings, and to wear the ephod in my presence? And did I not give your clan the meat from all the Yisra’elites’ fire-offerings? So why are you now defiling the sacrificial offerings and minhah-offerings to me, which I have demanded here at my dwelling? You held your sons in higher regard than me, making them fat by allowing them to keep the choicest part of every minhah-offering in Yisra’el given on behalf of my people. P3
a

“ ‘Therefore,’—oracle of Yahweh, god of Yisra’el—‘I once said to you, ‘Your family and your relatives will live in my presence for all time,’ but now:’—oracle of Yahweh—‘that will never happen! Rather, I will honor those who honor me, and those who despise me will be cursed. Be aware—in a short time, I will cut down your progeny and the progeny of all your relatives, and prevent any in your family b

c from living a long life. You will regard your own dwelling place as cramped—in contrast to all the things that make Yisra’el so beautiful—and there will never be any in your family who live a long life. It’s not just one person whom I will cut off from serving at my altar, so as to make your sight fail and to grieve your spirit, but rather the entire male increase of your family will die off. And this will be the sign to you of what is going to happen to your two sons, to Hophni and Phinhas: they both will die on the same day.

d “Then I will raise up for myself a faithful priest; just as he will act in full accord with my heart and desires, so I will build up for him a faithful line of descendants who will always live in the presence of my anointed king. As a result, any of your family who remain will come and prostrate themselves before him, bringing a payment of silver and a round of bread, and beseech him, ‘Please, I beg you, appoint me to one of the priest’s offices, so that I may eat a little bread!’ ”

**

P4 [1.3] Back in the days when the priest’s boy Shmu’el was serving Yahweh alongside Eli, Yahweh’s oracles were quite rare—there was no such thing yet as a ‘break-through vision’.

a —
P4,1 a Now one day when Eli (whose eyes, by the way, had begun to fail so that he wasn’t really able to see) was sleeping in his usual place, and
b when the divine lamp had yet to burn itself out, and when Shmu’el
c was sleeping in Yahweh’s temple where the divine battle-chest was. . .

**

P5 “Hey!” Yahweh called to Shmu’el. “Over here!”
The boy ran to Eli, and said, “Here I am—I heard you call me.”
“I didn’t call you. Go back and go to sleep.” So he went back and went to sleep.

—
P5,1 But Yahweh persisted, again calling out, “Shmu’el!”
Shmu’el immediately got up and went to see Eli. “Here I am—I heard you call me.”

"I didn't call you, my son. Go back and go to sleep." (Now this was before Shmu'el knew Yahweh, and before any of Yahweh's oracles had been revealed to him.)

Yahweh persisted, calling Shmu'el a third time. The boy again got up and went to see Eli. "Here I am—I heard you call me." That's when Eli realized that Yahweh was calling the boy.

"Go back and go to sleep," Eli said to Shmu'el. "And if someone calls you again, say 'Speak Yahweh, for your servant is listening!'"

So Shmu'el went back and went to sleep in his usual place. Then Yahweh again entered the temple, and after stationing himself nearby, called out just as he had previously, "Shmu'el! Shmu'el!"

This time Shmu'el responded, "Speak, for your servant is listening!"

**

"Look" Yahweh said to Shmu'el, "I'm going to do something in Yisra'el that will make the ears tingle of everyone who hears about it. On the day that happens, I will bring into effect against Eli everything that I spoke concerning his family, from beginning to end. I told him that I was going to condemn his family for all time, on account of this sin: that although he was aware that his sons were treating people with contempt, he didn't reproach them. For that reason, with respect to Eli's family, I have sworn that his family's sin could never be propitiated—neither through sacrifice nor through minhah-offerings."

P6

a

b

Shmu'el slept till morning. After waking, he opened the doors of Yahweh's temple, but he was too scared to tell Eli about the vision he had had.

A little while later, Eli called out, "Shmu'el, my son!"

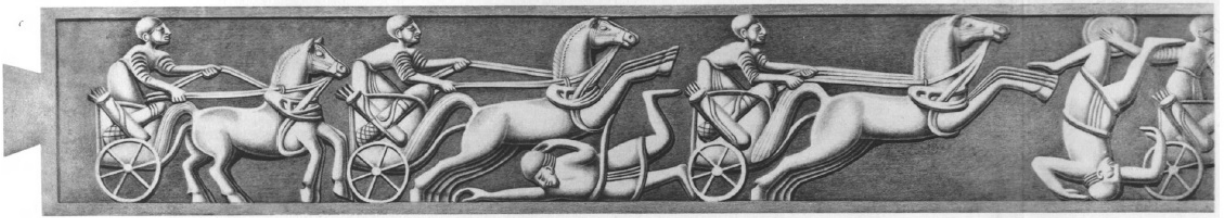
"Here I am."

"Tell me, what matter specifically did Yahweh speak to you about? Please don't hide it from me. May God punish you—now and always—if you withhold from me a single word of anything he said to you." So Shmu'el told him everything and didn't withhold a single word, leading Eli to think, "It really was Yahweh. Let him do as he sees fit."

c

d

**



“And then the battle let loose!”

Figure 1: The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 32, no. 159c. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

P7
a Shmu’el grew in stature—both because Yahweh was with him, and because Yahweh ensured that every single one of his oracles to Shmu’el came to pass. And so all Yisra’el, from Dan to Be’er-Sheba, knew that Shmu’el was established as one of Yahweh’s prophets.

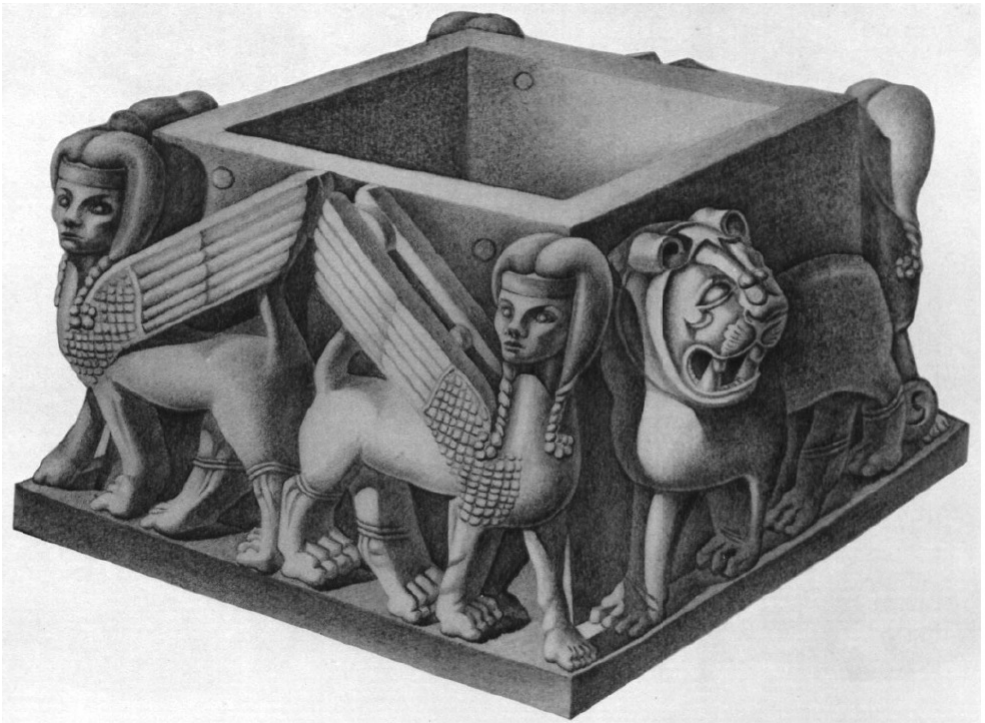
—

P7,1 Yahweh continued to appear in Shiloh, for Yahweh had revealed himself to Shmu’el in Shiloh to provide oracles.

**

P8 [1.4] Some time later, Shmu’el gave the command to all Yisra’el to march out and meet the Philishtines in battle. They set up camp in Eben-ha’Ezer while the Philishtines camped in Apheq. The Philishtines at once formed their battle lines, preparing to attack Yisra’el—and then the battle let loose! The Yisra’elites were thoroughly routed by the Philishtines, who struck down about four thousand men from their forces on the battlefield.

a When the army arrived back at camp, Yisra’el’s elders asked, “Why
b did Yahweh let us be routed today by the Philishtines? Let’s bring the battle-chest of the Confederation with Yahweh here from Shiloh—that way he can march right there with us and bring us victory over our enemies, no matter how strong they are.” So the army sent messengers to Shiloh, and they in turn brought up from there the battle-chest of the Confederation with Yahweh of Armies, Who Sits Astride the Winged Sphinxes. (At that time, Eli’s two sons—Hophni and Phinhas—were
c d stationed there with the battle-chest of the Confederation with God.)



“...the Winged Sphinxes...”

Figure 2: *The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 2, no. 1c.* Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

The moment that the battle-chest of the Confederation with Yahweh entered the camp, all the Yisra’elite forces began screaming out loud war-whoops, causing the ground to shake in response. When the Philishtines heard the whooping noises, they exclaimed, “What’s with all the loud war-whooping in the Hebrews’ camp?!” That’s when they realized that Yahweh’s battle-chest had entered the camp.

The Philishtines grew more and more frightened, crying out to one another:

“God has entered their camp!”

“We’re in big trouble now—nothing like this has ever happened before!”

“Yes—big trouble! Who will save us from the power of these terrible gods?!”

“These are the same gods who completely destroyed Egypt’s army out in the desert!”

“Get hold of yourselves, and be men, Philishtines! Otherwise, you will slave for the Hebrews just as they previously slaved for you. So be men, and fight!”

The Philishtines went on the attack, and Yisra’el was again routed, with every man fleeing for his life. The slaughter was very great—thirty thousand troops from Yisra’el’s forces fell in battle. At the same time, the divine battle-chest was captured, and Eli’s two sons—Hophni and Phinhas—died.

g A Benyaminite soldier ran from the front-lines at top speed, and arrived at Shiloh later that day with his clothing all torn and his head spattered with dirt. He entered town right at the spot where Eli was—sitting there on the bench at the side of the road and watching intently (for deep down in his heart, he feared for God’s battle-chest). As the man went through town reporting the news, the entire town began crying out in anguish. Eli heard the sound of the shouting and, just as he was thinking “What’s all this commotion about?”, the man rushed up and told him the news. (Eli was ninety-eight years old, and—because his eyes were frozen—he really couldn’t see.) The man said to Eli, “I’ve just arrived from the front lines, I myself having fled from the front lines earlier today.”

“What news do you have, my son?”

“Yisra’el has fled from the Philishtines,” the messenger answered, “and—unfortunately—a great slaughter was inflicted on the army! Also, your two sons Hophni and Phinhas are dead, and God’s battle-chest has been captured!”

**

P9 The moment he mentioned God’s battle-chest, Eli fell backwards off the bench there at the town gate, and—because he was very old and fat—he broke his neck and died, after having personally governed Yisra’el for forty years.

When his daughter-in-law (Phinhas’ wife), who was nearing the end of her pregnancy, heard the news about God’s battle-chest being

captured and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband, she crouched down and delivered her baby, as her labor pains had come upon her very suddenly. As the time of her death drew near, the women standing beside her consoled her, “Don’t be afraid, for you’ve given birth to a son.” But she didn’t answer or show any reaction. She named the boy Iykabod (that is, Where is God’s glory?) and gasped out—in reference to God’s battle-chest being captured and to the deaths of her father-in-law and husband—“God’s glory has left Yisra’el!”

“God’s glory has left Yisra’el,” she repeated, “for God’s battle-chest has been captured!”

**

Once the Philishtines had captured God’s battle-chest, they brought it from Eben-ha’Ezer to Ashdod. From there the Philishtines took God’s battle-chest and brought it to Dagon’s temple, where they set it beside the statue of Dagon. Early next day, the Ashdodites came to the temple, and there was Dagon—toppled over, face-down in front of Yahweh’s battle-chest! So they returned the statue to its place.

P10 [1.5]

Early the next morning they returned; lo and behold—there was Dagon again, toppled over face-down, in front of Yahweh’s battle-chest. This time, though, Dagon’s head and his two hands had been cut off and were resting beside the threshold; Dagon himself, however, remained lying on top of it. For this reason, to this day the priests of Dagon—and all who enter the temple of Dagon—avoid stepping on the threshold of Dagon’s temple in Ashdod.

**

Yahweh acted with a heavy hand toward the Ashdodites, laying waste to them and striking them with hemorrhoids—Ashdod, as well as the surrounding areas. When the men of Ashdod saw that this was how it was going to be, they said, “Yisra’el’s god’s battle-chest can’t remain here with us, for he has taken a brutal hand against us and against our god Dagon.” So they sent for and assembled all the Philishtines’ ruling men together in Ashdod. After posing the question, “What should we do about Yisra’el’s god’s battle-chest?”, they decided: “The

P11

battle-chest should be transferred to Gath.” And so they transferred Yisra’el’s god’s battle-chest to Gath.

P11,1 But shortly after they transferred it, Yahweh put his hand against the town and caused a very great confusion. He struck the men of the town, from the most important to the least significant, and afflicted them with hemorrhoids.

Then they sent God’s battle-chest to Eqrn. But as soon as it arrived in Eqrn, the Eqrnites cried out, “They transferred Yisra’el’s god’s battle-chest over to us in order to kill us and our people.” So they sent for and assembled together all the Philishtines’ ruling men. They demanded, “Send away Yisra’el’s god’s battle-chest—let it return to its place so that it won’t kill us or our people.” Indeed, a deathly confusion gripped the entire town; God acted with an extremely harsh hand there. And when the men who didn’t die were struck by hemorrhoids, the outcry of the town rose up to the skies.

P11,2 [1.6] Yahweh’s battle-chest remained in the Philistine countryside for seven months. The Philishtines called to their priests and diviners, “What should we do about Yahweh’s battle-chest? Show us how we should send it back to its place.”

P11,3 “If you are going to send back Yisra’el’s god’s battle-chest,” they said, “don’t send it back without payment. Rather, you absolutely must pay for it with a guilt-offering—then you will be healed and you will learn why he wouldn’t pull his hand back from you.”

a “What guilt-offering should we offer as payment for it?”

b The priests and diviners replied, “In accord with the number of the Philishtines’ ruling men—five golden hemorrhoids and five golden mice, for there was one plague for all of you and your rulers. So you should make figurines of hemorrhoids and figurines of mice which laid waste to the land. If you show respect to Yisra’el’s god, perhaps he will lighten his hand from you, from your gods, and from your land. Why should you harden your heart in the way that Egypt and Phar’oh hardened their hearts? Wasn’t it the case that as soon as he punished them, they sent them to go on their way? So therefore, go and prepare one new cart and two yoked heifers that haven’t previously been under the yoke, tie the heifers to the cart, and return their calves back

to their pen. Then take Yahweh's battle-chest and set it on the cart; as for the gold implements which you are sending back as a guilt offering to their god, put them in a cedar chest on the side of the cart. Then send it off, letting it go on its own. Look closely: if it travels up the border road toward Beth-Shemesh, that means their god did this great harm to us; but if not, then we will know that it wasn't his hand that harmed us. Rather, it was chance that befell us."

The men did exactly as they were told: they took two yoked heifers, tied them to the cart, and then shut up their calves in their pen. They set Yahweh's battle-chest on the cart, along with the cedar chest, the gold mice, and the hemorrhoid figurines. The heifers set off straight down the road, in the direction of Beth-Shemesh. They travelled only on that one road, mooing as they went, and always going straight ahead, with the Philistine rulers following them the whole way, as far as the border of Beth-Shemesh.

At that time, the people of Beth-Shemesh were working the wheat harvest in the valley. When they looked up and saw the battle-chest, they rejoiced at the sight. Once the cart entered the field of Yehoshu'a the Beth-Shemeshite, it stopped there, at a spot where there was a large rock. They broke up the wood from the cart, and sacrificed the heifers as a burnt-offering to Yahweh.

The Levites took Yahweh's battle-chest down from the cart, along with the cedar chest containing the golden implements, and set them on the large rock. At the same time, the men of Beth-Shemesh made burnt offerings and sacrifices on that day to Yahweh. Likewise, once the five Philistine rulers saw what had happened, they returned at once to Ekron.

Here is a list of the golden hemorrhoids that the Philistines paid as a guilt-offering to Yahweh:

One for Ashdod

One for Aza

One for Ashqelon

P11,9 One for Gath

—

P11,10 One for Ebron.

—

P11,11 And the gold mice: they signified the total number of the Philishtine cities under the five ruling men, including all walled towns and rural villages, as far as the large meadow upon which they rested Yahweh's battle-chest, located to this day on the property of Yehoshu'a the Beth-Shemeshite.

 Almost immediately, however, Yahweh struck down the men of Beth-Shemesh (for they had looked inside Yahweh's battle-chest)—he struck down from the people seventy men fifty thousand men. The people grieved over the dead, for Yahweh had struck a great blow against them.

 After asking themselves, "Who can stand before Yahweh, this most holy god? Whom should he transfer it to after us?", the men of Beth-Shemesh decided to send messengers to the inhabitants of Qiryath-Ye'arim, saying, "The Philishtines sent back Yahweh's battle-chest. Come down here and take it back for yourselves."

[1.7] The men of Qiryath-Ye'arim came and took up Yahweh's battle-chest, bringing it to the house of Abinadab in the town of Gib'ah; at the same time, they sanctified his son El'azar to keep watch over Yahweh's battle-chest.

**

P12 a From the day the battle-chest came to reside in Qiryath-Ye'arim, a great deal of time passed—twenty years total—during which the entire Yisra'elite nation followed after Yahweh.

—

P12,1 Shmu'el said to the whole nation, "If you are fully committed to returning to Yahweh, remove any gods of foreign lands from your midst, as well as any images of Ashtarte. Set your heart firmly on Yahweh, and serve him alone, so that he might save you from Philishtine control." And so the Yisra'elites removed the images of Ba'al and Ashtarte, and served only Yahweh.

**

Shmu'el said, "Assemble all Yisra'el at Mitspah so that I might pray to Yahweh on your behalf." And so they assembled at Mitspah; after drawing water and making a pour-offering before Yahweh, they fasted that day and confessed, "In this place we have sinned against Yahweh." And so Shmu'el governed the Yisra'elites at Mitspah.

When the Philishtines heard that the Yisra'elites had gathered at Mitspah, the Philishtines' rulers marched against Yisra'el. But when the Yisra'elites heard this, they grew fearful of the Philishtines, pleading with Shmu'el, "Don't so ignore us that you fail to cry out on our behalf to Yahweh our god! Let him save us from the Philistine threat!"

Shmu'el took a single suckling lamb and offered it up in its entirety to Yahweh as a burnt-offering. Shmu'el then called out to Yahweh on behalf of Yisra'el, and Yahweh answered him. As Shmu'el was raising up the burnt-offering, the Philishtines approached for battle against Yisra'el. But Yahweh at once thundered with a tremendous crash against the Philishtines and thoroughly confused them; and so they were routed by Yisra'el. The Yisra'elites charged out from Mitspah in pursuit of the Philishtines and slaughtered them all the way to the outskirts of Beth-Kar. Shmu'el then took a single stone, and placed it midway between Mitspah and Shen. He named it Stone-of-Help (Eben-ha'Ezer), saying, "Up to this spot here Yahweh helped us." The Philishtines had now been vanquished, and they no longer tried to enter Yisra'el's territory. And so Yahweh's hand opposed the Philishtines for the rest of Shmu'el's life.

The towns that the Philishtines had taken from Yisra'el now returned to Yisra'el: Yisra'el recovered from Philistine control the lands between Eqrn and Gath, as well as those towns' territories. In addition, there was peace between Yisra'el and the Amorites.

And so Shmu'el governed over Yisra'el for the remainder of his life. Each year he would go and make a circuit across Beth-El, Gilgal, and Mitspah, adjudicating Yisra'el in all these places. His journey would end at Ramah, for that is where his house was, and where he governed over Yisra'el, and where he had built an altar to Yahweh.

**

P14 [1.8] Now when Shmu'el had grown old, he appointed his sons as governors over Yisra'el. His oldest son was named Yo'el and his youngest was Abiyah—both governors in Be'er-Sheba. His sons, however, did not follow in his ways; rather, they pursued unjust gain by taking bribes and perverting justice.

**

P15 All the elders of Yisra'el gathered together and went to Ramah to meet Shmu'el. They said to him, "Look, you've grown old and your sons haven't followed in your ways. Therefore, we now demand that you appoint a king for us—someone to govern us, similar to all the nations." Shmu'el, however, thought this was a terrible idea—that is, when they demanded "Appoint a king for us, someone who will govern us!"—and so he prayed to Yahweh.

**

P16 a Yahweh said to Shmu'el, "Heed the voice of the people, in everything they have asked of you. For it is not you whom they've rejected; rather, it is me they've rejected from ruling over them. Similar to all their actions which they undertook from the day I brought them up from Egypt down to the present—forsaking me and serving other gods—now they are doing the same to you. Now therefore, you must heed their voice. At the same time, however, you absolutely must warn them and inform them of how the king who is going to rule over them will govern."

—

P16,1 And so Shmu'el repeated all of Yahweh's words to the people who demanded a king from him:

—

P16,2 "This is how the king who is going to rule over you will govern: he will take your sons, and place them in his chariotry and his cavalry (and they will run in front of his chariot); he will appoint them as his generals and captains; he will make them do his plowing and gather his harvest; and he will have them fashion weapons for his army and equipment for his chariotry. At the same time, he will take your daughters to be his perfumers and butchers and bakers. He will

a

take your best farmland, vineyards and olive groves, and give them to his officials. He will take a tenth of your grains and fruit in tax, and give them to his senior officers and officials. Your best workers, maid-servants, and young men, and your he-asses—he will take all these and use them for his own work. He will take a tenth of your sheep. And as for you yourselves—you will become his slaves. One day in the future, you will cry out on account of your king, whom you’ve chosen just for yourselves—but the day that happens, Yahweh won’t answer you.”

b
c

But the people refused to listen to Shmu’el. “No!” they cried. “We must have a king! Then we really will be just like all other nations, with a king who governs us, marches out to war in front of us, and fights our battles.”

Shmu’el listened carefully to all their words, and reported them to Yahweh.

**

Yahweh told Shmu’el, “Heed their words and establish a king for them.” Hearing that, Shmu’el ordered the Yisra’elites, “All of you—return to your towns!”

P17

**

There was a man from the Binyamin region—an excellent warrior—by the name of Qish Abi’elsson; he was the grandson of Tseror Bekorathsson, and was descended from Ephiyah the Yaminite. He had a son named Sha’ul who was a very fine young man. In fact, there was not a single man among all the Yisra’elites who was superior to him in stature—he was the tallest of all the people.

P18 [1.9]

One day the she-asses belonging to Sha’ul’s father Qish went missing. Qish said to his son Sha’ul, “Take one of the servants with you and get going—go look for the asses!”

a

Sha’ul crossed through the Ephrayim hill country, and crossed through the land around Shalishah, but they didn’t find them. They crossed through the Sha’alim region, but still—nothing. They then crossed through the Yamini territory, but didn’t find them there either. When they came to the region of Tsuph, Sha’ul said to the servant who

b

had come with him, "Come on—let's go back. Otherwise, my father will stop worrying about the asses, and start worrying about us."

c "Look here. There's a holy man in this town. The man is quite famous—everything that he says actually comes true. Let's go there right now; perhaps he can tell us the direction that we should have gone in."

"Well now," Sha'ul said to his servant, "if we go, what can we bring the man? For our food supply is nearly gone, and we don't have a travel-gift to take to a holy man. What do we have with us?"

d "Look at what's here in my hand—a quarter-shekel of silver," the servant added. "I'll give it to the holy man, and he can tell us what direction to go in." (Previously in Yisra'el, when a man was going to seek an oracle from God, he would say, "Come, let's go to the seer," for the present-day "prophet" was called a "seer" back then.)

e Sha'ul said to his servant, "Your suggestion is a good one. Come on—let's go." So they went to the town where the holy man was. As they were going up the stairs leading into town, they happened upon some young women coming out to draw water, and said to them, "Is there a seer in this town?"

"There is," they answered. "Up there straight ahead. But hurry now—he's come to town today because there's a sacrifice for the people at the hill-shrine. When you enter town, you'll find him right away. He hasn't yet gone up to the hill-shrine to eat. For the people won't eat until he arrives—because he personally must bless the sacrifice.

f After that, the celebrants will eat. Now, get going—really, you'll find him right away."

g So they went up to the town. Just as they were coming into the middle of town, they chanced to meet Shmu'el as he was leaving to go up to the hill-shrine.

P18,1 Now Yahweh had revealed in Shmu'el's ear the day before Sha'ul arrived, "Tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Binyamin, and you will anoint him as ruler over my people Yisra'el. He will
a deliver my people from Philishtine control. Indeed, I have taken notice of my people's plight and heard their cry for help."

When Shmu'el saw Sha'ul, Yahweh responded, "Here's the man I spoke to you about. This man will protect my people."



"Shmu'el brought them into the shrine's meeting hall and gave them a place at the head of the celebrants. . ."

Figure 3: The Megiddo Ivoories, Plate 32, no. 160c. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

Sha'ul approached Shmu'el in the passageway of the town gate, and said, "Excuse me—can you tell me where the seer's house is?"

Shmu'el answered Sha'ul, "I'm the seer. Come with me to the hill-shrine up ahead. Both of you can eat with me today, and then in the morning I'll send you on your way. In the meantime, I have news that will relieve you of all your worries: your she-asses that have been lost now for three days—don't be concerned about them, for they've been found. Toward whom does the entire desire of Yisra'el point? Isn't it to you and your family?"

b

c

"Aren't I a Yaminite," Sha'ul replied, "from one of the smallest tribes of Yisra'el? And isn't my clan the smallest of all the clans of the Binyamini tribes? So why have you spoken to me in this manner?"

P18,2

Taking Sha'ul and his servant with him, Shmu'el brought them into shrine's meeting hall and gave them a place at the head of the celebrants, who were about thirty in number. Shmu'el said to the butcher, "Dole out to the celebrants the portion of meat that I've given to you. Wherever I indicate to you, set a piece down beside you."

P18,3

a

The butcher picked up the leg along with its trimmings and placed them in front of Sha'ul, saying, "Here's what's left. Put it in front of you. Eat. In fact, it was set aside for you as soon as the invitation—I have invited the people'—was given." And so Sha'ul ate with Shmu'el

b

c

on that day.

They made their way back down to town from the hill-shrine, following which Shmu'el spoke with Sha'ul on the roof. They woke up early the next day. Just as dawn was breaking, Shmu'el called Sha'ul up to the roof, "Come here—I'd like to send you on your way." Sha'ul roused himself, and then the two of them—he and Shmu'el—went outside.

As they were descending the outskirts of the town, Shmu'el said to Sha'ul, "Tell the servant to go on ahead of us." Once he had gone ahead, he continued, "As for you, stop right now and I will tell you God's oracle."

**

P19 [1.10] Shmu'el took a flask of oil and drizzled it on his head. Kissing him, he said "Isn't it true that Yahweh has anointed you as ruler over his land? After you leave me today, you will find two men at Rachel's grave in the territory of Binyamin near Tseltsah. They will say to you, 'The she-asses which you went to look for have been found. But now your father has forgotten his problems with the she-asses, and he's become anxious about you, worrying 'What will I do about my son?'"

"Traveling on a little further from there, you will come to Elon Tabor, where three men going up to Beth-El to worship God will find you. One of them will be carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and the other carrying a skin of wine. They will greet you and offer you two of the loaves, which you should accept from them.

"After that, you will go to Gib'at-ha'Elohim, where some Philistine prefects are stationed. When you arrive there in town, you will happen upon a band of prophets coming down from the hill-shrine and—preceded by lute-, tambourine-, flute-, and lyre-music—they will be chanting back and forth in a trance. Then Yahweh's spirit will rush upon you and you will become entranced and chant back and forth with them, turning yourself into a different man. Now when these signs come true for you, do how ever you see fit, for God will be with you.

"After that, you must go down ahead of me to Gilgal. Take note—I am going to come down to you, to offer up burnt-offerings, and to

sacrifice peace-offerings. You should wait for seven days until I come to you, and then I will reveal to you what you must do.”

However, as soon as Sha’ul turned his shoulder to leave Shmu’el, God changed his mind, and all these signs came to pass on that very day.

—
They went from there to Gib’ah, and right away there was a band of prophets coming to meet Sha’ul. God’s spirit rushed upon him, and he became entranced and chanted back and forth with them. And so it happened that everyone who had known him previously, when they saw him there chanting with the prophets. . . P19,1

—
...said, each one to his friend, “What’s happened to Qishssan? Is Sha’ul also one of the prophets?” Whereupon one man from that town replied, “And who’s their father?” That’s how the saying “Is Sha’ul also one of the prophets?” became a proverb. P19,2 a

When he came out of the trance and stopped chanting, he went to the hill-shrine. Sha’ul’s uncle said to him and his servant, “Where did you go?” b

“To search for the she-asses. We looked, but found nothing. So we went to see Shmu’el.”

“Please,” Sha’ul’s uncle said, “tell me what Shmu’el said to you.”

“He told us very clearly,” Sha’ul answered, “that the asses had been found.” However, in the matter of the kingship, he did not tell him what Shmu’el had said.

**

Shmu’el called the people together to Yahweh’s temple at Mitspah. He said to the Yisra’elites: P20

**

“Thus has spoken Yahweh, god of Yisra’el, ‘I brought Yisra’el up from Egypt, rescuing you from subjection by Egypt’s hand, as well as subjection by the hand of all the kingdoms oppressing you.’ However, on this very day, you have rejected your god who saved you from all your troubles and difficulties. You said to him—‘You must put a P21

a king over us!" So be it then—take your positions in front of Yahweh,
b arranged in your tribes and companies."

Then Shmu'el presented all the tribes of Yisra'el, and the lot fell to the tribe of Binyamin. He presented the tribe of Binyamin, arranged by its clans, and the lot fell to the clan of the Matri. Then the lot fell to
c Sha'ul Qishsson. But when they looked for him, he was nowhere to
d be seen. They asked Yahweh again, "Has a man come here yet?"

P21,1 Yahweh said, "Look, there he is—hiding among the jars!" So they ran and took him from there. When he stood up in the midst of the people, he stood head and shoulders above everyone.

Shmu'el said to all the people, "Do you see the one whom Yahweh has chosen? Indeed, there is none like him among all the people."

All the people shouted out, "Long live the king!"

P21,2 Shmu'el then told the people the rules of the kingship, after which he
a recorded them in a scroll and placed it before Yahweh. Then Shmu'el sent the people back to their homes. At the same time, Sha'ul too went home to Gib'ah, attended by a large crowd whose hearts Yahweh had touched.

Meanwhile, however, worthless fellows muttered, "How is this guy going to save us?" They belittled him and didn't take him a gift,
b and it seemed like they were plotting something.

**

P22 [1.11] a Nahash the Ammonite marched up and camped against Yabesh-Gil'ad. All the men of Yabesh said to Nahash, "Make a peace agreement with us, and we will be your subjects."

Nahash the Ammonite replied, "These are the terms of my agreement with you: I will gouge out the right eyes of every one of you and then claim it as my humiliation of Yisra'el."

"Leave us be for seven days so that we might send messengers throughout the territory of Yisra'el," the elders of Yabesh said. "If there is no one who can defend us, then we will come out to surrender to you."

When messengers came to Sha'ul's village of Gib'ah and related these things to the people, everyone cried aloud and wept. Just then

Sha'ul came back from the pasture after tending the cattle. He said, "What's the matter with the people and making them cry?" Then they recounted to him in detail what the men of Yabesh had said. God's spirit rushed upon Sha'ul when he heard these words, and he became extremely angry.

b

He took a pair of oxen, cut them up into pieces, and sent them throughout the territory of Yisra'el by messenger, announcing "Whoever doesn't follow Sha'ul and Shmu'el out to battle, this is what will be done to his cattle." The fear of Yahweh fell upon the people, and they went out to battle unified as a single force. He mustered them in Bezeq; the Yisra'elites were three hundred thousand in number, and the Yehudeans thirty thousand.

They said to the messengers who had come, "Thus you should say to the men of Yabesh-Gil'ad: 'Victory will be yours by noon tomorrow'."

The messengers went on their way. When the men of Yabesh heard the news, they were overjoyed. They then sent word to Nahash the Ammonite, "Tomorrow we will come out to meet you, and you may do to us anything that you please."

c

On the following day, Sha'ul divided his forces into three groups. They infiltrated the camp during the morning watch, and then went on a rampage against Ammon that lasted till noon. As for the survivors—they fled in disarray, with not even a group of two among them remaining together.

P22,1

The people said to Shmu'el, "Who was it who said 'Let Sha'ul rule over us'? Hand those men over and we will put them to death!"

But Sha'ul objected, "Let no man be put to death today, for today Yahweh has won a great victory here in Yisra'el!"

Shmu'el said to the people, "Come, let's go to Gilgal and reaffirm the kingship there." And so all the people went to Gilgal and made Sha'ul king at Yahweh's temple there. They then sacrificed peace offerings there to Yahweh, with Sha'ul and all the Yisra'elites celebrating joyously in front of Yahweh's temple.

**

P23 [1.12]

Shmu'el said to all Yisra'el, "Take note: I have carried out everything that you asked of me, and have put a king over you. And now, here he is—the king, walking about before you! But as for me, I've grown old and grey (though my sons are still here with you), having journeyed continuously with you from my boyhood until today.

"Look at me—testify against me here in Yahweh's presence and before his anointed regarding anyone's ox I've taken, anyone's ass I've taken, anyone I've extorted, anyone I've cheated, anyone I've taken a bribe from, or anyone I've turned a blind eye to, and I will defend myself to you."

"You haven't extorted us," they replied. "Nor have you cheated us, nor have you taken anything from the hand of any man."

a "Yahweh is a witness to you," he proclaimed, "and his anointed this very day is a witness, that you haven't found anything against me."

"Yes," they affirmed, "he is a witness!"

**

P24 a Shmu'el said to the people, "It is Yahweh who worked with Mosheh and Aharon, and who brought your ancestors up from Egypt. Now b then, pay close attention while I justify to you—here in front of Yahweh's temple—all of Yahweh's kind acts that he performed for you and your ancestors. Ya'aqob went to Egypt, and then when your ancestors cried out to Yahweh, he sent Mosheh and Aharon. They led your ancestors out from Egypt and settled them in this place. But they forgot Yahweh their god. So he fought against them, selling them into the hands of Sisra, the commander of Hatsor's army, into the hands of the Philishtines, and into the hands of Mo'ab's king. But then they cried out to Yahweh, 'We have sinned, for we have forsaken Yahweh and served Ba'als and Ashtartes. But now—save us from the hands of our enemies, and then we will serve you!'

"So Yahweh sent Yeruba'al, Bedan, Yiphtah, and Shmu'el, and saved you from your enemies on every side; and so you lived in peace. But when you saw that Nahash the king of the Ammonites was marching against you, you said to me, 'No! We want a king to rule over us!' even though it is Yahweh your god who is your king.

“Now therefore, here you are—the king whom you have chosen! The one whom you asked for! See—Yahweh has set a king over you! If you fear Yahweh, and serve him and obey him, and if you don’t rebel against what Yahweh tells you, then both you and the king whom you have chosen will truly be Yahweh’s followers. But if you do not obey Yahweh, and if you rebel against what he says, then Yahweh’s hand will be against both you and your ancestors! So now, pay close attention—see this great thing that Yahweh is going to do before your eyes! Isn’t it the wheat harvest today? When I call out to Yahweh, he will respond with thunder and rain. Then you will know and see that the evil you have done is very great in Yahweh’s sight—to ask for a king for yourselves!”

c

Then Shmu’el called out to Yahweh, and Yahweh responded right then with thunder and rain. All the people became terrified of Yahweh as well as Shmu’el, and so they said to Shmu’el, “Intercede on behalf of your servants to Yahweh your god—don’t let us die! For on top of all our sins, we have added this evil thing—to ask for a king for ourselves!”

P24,1 a

“Don’t be afraid,” Shmu’el said to the people. “Although you are entirely at fault for doing this evil thing, do not under any circumstances turn from following Yahweh. Serve Yahweh with all your heart. Don’t turn to follow after worthless things which do not help and do not save, for they are worthless. Indeed, on account of his great name, Yahweh won’t abandon his people. For Yahweh really is determined to make you into his own people.

b c

d

“As for me—far be it from me to wrong Yahweh, by ceasing to intercede on your behalf. Rather, I will direct you along the good and straight path. So therefore, fear Yahweh and serve him truthfully, with all your heart. Really, look at how he has done great things with you. Know, however, that if you do wrong, you will surely be swept away—both you and your king!”

**

Sha’ul was years old when he became king, and he ruled over Yisra’el for two years. Sha’ul chose for himself three thousand men from Yisra’el—two thousand were stationed with him in Mikdash and

P25 [1.13] a

in the Bethel hill country, and one thousand were stationed with Yonathan in Gib'ah, in the territory of Binyamin. Everyone else he sent home.

Yonathan attacked and destroyed the Philishtine garrison located in Gib'ah. At about the same time that the Philishtines heard the news, Sha'ul blew on the shophar, proclaiming throughout the land, "Let the Hebrews hear the news!" And so all Yisra'el heard the news: "Sha'ul has destroyed the Philishtine garrison—and now Yisra'el has made itself even more odious to the Philishtines!"

b The Yisra'elite forces were summoned to Gilgal to join Sha'ul; meanwhile, the Philishtines gathered together to wage war against Yisra'el—thirty thousand chariotry, six thousand cavalry, and foot-soldiers as numerous as the sand at the seashore. They marched up and camped at Mikmash, east of Beth-Awen.

When the Yisra'elites saw that they were under threat (for their forces were being hard pressed), they hid in caves and thickets, in rock formations, and in hollows and cisterns. The Hebrews fled across the Yarden, to the territories of Gad and Gil'ad. Sha'ul, on the other hand, remained in Gilgal even though all his forces were afraid to follow him. He waited seven days—the date that Shmu'el had set—but when Shmu'el didn't come to Gilgal, his men began deserting him.

Sha'ul ordered, "Bring me the burnt-offering and the peace-offerings," and then he offered up the burnt-offering. Just as he was finishing sacrificing the burnt-offering, Shmu'el arrived. Sha'ul went out to meet him and bid him welcome.

"What have you done?" Shmu'el asked.

c Sha'ul replied, "When I saw that my forces were deserting me, and that you hadn't come on the date you had set, and that the Philishtines had organized at Mikmash, I thought, 'Now the Philishtines are going to come down to attack me at Gilgal and I still haven't sought Yahweh's favor.' So I resolved to do something and sacrificed the burnt-offering."

—

P25,1 "You've acted foolishly," Shmu'el charged. "You didn't obey your god Yahweh's order, which he commanded you. Indeed, Yahweh would have made your dynasty over Yisra'el permanent; but now, your dynasty won't last! Yahweh sought a man after his own heart,

and appointed him as leader over his people. But you didn't carry out your duties as Yahweh commanded you to."

a

Straight away Shmu'el left Gilgal to go up to Gib'ah in the territory of Binyamin. Sha'ul counted the forces who had remained with him—roughly six hundred men. Sha'ul, his son Yonathan, and their remaining forces occupied the town of Gib'ah in the territory of Binyamin, whereas the Philishtines were camped at Mikmash.

P25,2 a

When the advance attack force left the Philishtines' camp, it separated into three companies—one headed down the Ophrah road, toward the region of Shu'al; the second headed down the Beth-Horon road; and the third headed down the border road overlooking the Hyena Valley, toward the desert wastes. At the same time, the rest of the garrison marched out to the Mikmash pass.

b

Now, at that time, no metal worker could be found anywhere in the land of Yisra'el, for the Philishtines had prevented it, saying, "So that the Hebrews don't make any swords or spears." As a result, everyone in Yisra'el would go down to the Philishtines to sharpen their plows, axes, double-edged hoes, and tillers. (A multi-edged whetstone was used for plows and axes, three-pronged pitchforks and double-edged hoes, and to sharpen goads.) Consequently, on the day of the battle, none of the forces with Sha'ul and Yonathan were armed with swords or spears; only Sha'ul and his son Yonathan were armed.

P25,3

That same day, Yonathan Sha'ulsson said to his equipment-bearer, "Come on, let's cross over to the Philistine garrison over there." (He did not, however, tell his father anything.) Sha'ul at the time was sitting under the pomegranate tree at the far end of the hill in the village of Migron. The forces with him numbered roughly six hundred men, including Yahweh's priest in Shiloh, the ephod-bearer Ahiyah Ahitubsson (Ahiyah was the cousin of Phinhas Elisson's son Ikabod). Now Sha'ul's forces were unaware that Yonathan had left.

P25,4 [1.14]

a

b

c

In the passes where Yonathan planned to cross over to the Philistine garrison, there were large outcrops on each side—one outcrop was known as Botsets, and the other Seneh. One jutted up from the north opposite Mikmash, and the other jutted up from the south opposite Gib'ah.

d

—
P25,5 Yonathan said to the page carrying his equipment, “Come on, let’s
a cross over to those dickheads’ garrison! Maybe Yahweh will do it
for us, for there’s nothing at all that can stop Yahweh from achieving
victory!”

“Do whatever you want,” his equipment-bearer replied. “Go for
it—I’ll be right there with you whatever you do!”
—

P25,6 “Look,” Yonathan said, “when we cross over to the men in the garrison,
we’ll show ourselves to them. If they say to us, ‘Halt! Don’t move
until we reach you,’ then we’ll stand in our place and won’t go up to
them. But if they say, ‘Come on up here,’ we’ll go up, for that’s the
sign that Yahweh has given them into our hands.”

When the two of them showed themselves to the Philistine garri-
son, the Philishtines said, “Look—some Hebrews are coming out from
the holes where they were hiding.” The men of the garrison called out
to Yonathan and his equipment bearer, “Come up here—we want to
have a word with you!”

—
**

P26 Yonathan said to his equipment-bearer, “Come up right after me, for
Yahweh has given them into Yisra’el’s hands!”

a Yonathan crawled up on his hands and knees, with his equipment-
bearer following behind. Then Yonathan attacked—the men fell in
front of him, with his equipment-bearer right behind him delivering
the death blows. In the initial attack, Yonathan and his equipment-
bearer killed some twenty men, across roughly half the Philistine
b work-site (an acre in extent).

Panic spread across the camp, throughout the surrounding fields,
and among the Philistine foot-soldiers—even the garrison and the
advance attack forces were panicked. The entire area was thrown into
such an uproar that it quickly turned into a holy terror.

Sha’ul’s lookouts in Gib’ah in the territory of Binyamin were ob-
serving the scene—when suddenly they saw the confusion mount and
begin to come closer and closer.

—
**

Sha'ul said to the forces with him, "Please, take roll and see who is missing." P27

They took roll and discovered that Yonathan and his equipment-bearer were nowhere to be seen. Sha'ul then ordered Ahiyah, "Bring God's battle-chest" (for God's battle-chest at that time was with the Yisra'elites). While Sha'ul was still speaking to the priest, the confusion in the Philishtines' camp was growing greater and greater. . . a

**

...so Sha'ul said to the priest, "Stop! Take your hand away!" P28 a

Then, giving out their war-cry, Sha'ul and all the men with him rushed into battle. Instantly, one man's sword was against another's—it was total chaos. Certain Hebrews had previously served the Philishtines, for they would march up with them into and all around their camp—they too sided with Yisra'el (that is, with Sha'ul and Yonathan). When all the Yisra'elites hiding in the Ephrayim hills heard that the Philishtines had fled, they also pursued after them in battle. And so on that day, as the battle spread beyond Beth-Awen, Yahweh gave victory to Yisra'el. b

As the Yisra'elites pressed on that day, Sha'ul urged on his forces, "Cursed is the man who eats any food before sunset—I must take vengeance on my enemies!" And so none of his men tasted any food that afternoon. c

—

Now the whole countryside had transitioned into forest, and there was a honeycomb lying on some open ground. When the Yisra'elite forces entered the forest, they immediately noticed the oozing honeycomb; however, no one was willing to bring his hand to his lips to taste it, for the men were afraid on account of their oath. P28,1

Yonathan, however, hadn't heard that his father had made his forces swear an oath, and so he extended the tip of the stick that he was holding and dipped it in the honey there in the forest. When he brought it to his lips, his eyes lit up. One of the Yisra'elite fighters told him, "Actually, your father made his men swear an oath, saying 'Cursed be the man who eats food today'—that's why our forces are so tired."

a "My father is needlessly creating trouble," Yonathan replied. "Take a look at me—see how my eyes have lit up because I tasted some of this honey! Really, if only his men had just eaten today from the enemy's spoils that they found... because right now our victory over the Philishtines hasn't been that great."

On that day, the Yisra'elites routed the Philishtines from Mikdash to Ayalon, with the result that the Yisra'elite forces had become exhausted. The men dove greedily on the plunder and took sheep, cattle, and calves. They then slaughtered them on the spot, and ate the meat while it was still bloody and raw.

Some men alerted Sha'ul: "Take note—your men are sinning against Yahweh by eating raw meat."

"You all have committed treachery!" Sha'ul cried. "Bring me a large stone—right now!"

"Go out among the men," he continued, "and tell each of them to bring his ox or sheep here to me. You all can slaughter them and eat them here, and so avoid sinning against Yahweh by eating raw meat."

b That night, every man in the Yisra'elite forces brought his own ox to Sha'ul, and they slaughtered the animals right then and there. (And so Sha'ul built an altar to Yahweh—that's how he began building an altar to Yahweh.)

**

P29 Sha'ul said, "Let's give chase to the Philishtines tonight—we'll plunder them all night long and not leave a single survivor."

"Go ahead," his men responded. "Do whatever seems good to you!"

—

P29,1 "Let's consult God here first," Ahiyah the priest said.

So Sha'ul sought an oracle from God, "If I give chase to the Philishtines, will you give them into Yisra'el's hands?" But God didn't answer him that day.

"Bring all the commanders here from the Yisra'elite forces," Sha'ul demanded. "We're going to find out why our oracle went wrong today. For I swear, as Yahweh—the one who gives victory to Yisra'el—lives, if this is because of my son Yonathan, he shall surely die." But no one from the Yisra'elite forces dared answer him.

He said to all the Yisra'elites, "You will be on one side, and my son Yonathan and I will be on the other."

"Whatever you think is right, go ahead and do," his men replied.

Sha'ul cried to Yahweh, "God of Yisra'el, give us the truth!" The lot fell to Yonathan and Sha'ul, whereas the Yisra'elite forces went free. Next Sha'ul demanded, "Cast the lot between me and my son Yonathan!" And the lot fell to Yonathan. P29,2

Sha'ul confronted Yonathan, "Tell me—what did you do?"

"Actually, I tasted a little honey with the tip of the stick I was holding," Yonathan told him. "I admit it—I deserve to die." a

"May God act accordingly, now and always," Sha'ul responded, "for you shall surely die Yonathan." P29,3

But the men objected, "Should Yonathan die—he who accomplished this great victory for Yisra'el? Absolutely not! As Yahweh lives, don't let a single hair from his head fall to the ground! For it was with the help of God that he accomplished this victory today!" And so the men won Yonathan's release and he didn't die.

But because Sha'ul had pulled back from pursuing the Philishtines, the Philishtines returned to their previous positions. P29,4

After capturing the kingship over Yisra'el, Sha'ul fought against his enemies on all sides—against Mo'ab, against the Ammonites, against Edom, against the kings of Tsobah, and against the Philishtines—condemning to defeat everyone whom he turned against. He acted valiantly and defeated Amaleq, and so saved Yisra'el from their constant raiding.

**

Sha'ul's sons were Yonathan, Yishwi, and Malki-Shu'ah. Here are the names of his two daughters: the eldest was named Merab, and the youngest Mikal. The name of Sha'ul's wife was Ahino'am Ahima'ats-daughter. The name of the leader of his army was Abiner Nersson, who was his cousin. (Sha'ul's father Qish and Abiner's father Ner were the sons of Abi'el.) P30 a

P30,1 The fighting against the Philishtines raged fiercely for all of Sha'ul's life. So every warrior or capable man that Sha'ul would see, he would conscript into his service.

**

P31 [1.15] a Shmu'el said to Sha'ul, "Previously Yahweh sent me to anoint you as king over his people Yisra'el. Now therefore, heed Yahweh's words:

—

P31,1 "Thus has Yahweh of Armies spoken: 'I am well aware of what Amaleq did to Yisra'el—how they ambushed them on the way up from Egypt. Therefore, go and strike Amaleq down! Burn everything they own, showing no mercy to them. Kill them all—men and women, toddlers and infants, cows and sheep, and camels as well as asses.' "

—

P31,2 Sha'ul informed his forces and mustered them in Tela'im—two hundred thousand foot soldiers, including ten thousand Yehudeans. Sha'ul proceeded to the Amaleqi capital, where he vied for control of the wadi.

a Sha'ul said to the Qenite, "Come now, defect. Desert the Amaleqi, lest I sweep you up with them, for you personally showed kindness to the Yisra'elites when they came up from Egypt." And so the Qenite defected from the Amaleq.

b Sha'ul attacked Amaleq, starting in Hewilah and going all the way down to Shur, which borders Egypt. He captured Agag the king of Amaleq alive, but executed all his people by the sword. Sha'ul and his men had compassion on Agag, on the best of the sheep and cattle (as well as the second-best), on the he-lambs, and on all the good livestock; they weren't willing to immolate them, whereas they did burn all the property that was without value or sickly-looking.

**

P32 As a result, an oracle of Yahweh came to Shmu'el, "I regret that I made Sha'ul king, for he has turned away from me and hasn't carried out my orders." Shmu'el became so inflamed with anger about this that he called out in prayer to Yahweh all night long.

a Shmu'el set out early in the morning to meet Sha'ul, but on his arrival he was told, "Sha'ul went to Karmel—he was there erecting a

victory stole for himself—then he turned around, crossed back through here, and went down to Gilgal.”

b

Shmu’el continued on his way to see Sha’ul. When he arrived, Sha’ul said to him, “Blessed are you to Yahweh. I have carried out Yahweh’s order.”

“Then what’s this bleating of sheep that’s come to my ears—or the lowing of cattle that I hear?” Shmu’el asked.

“They were brought here from the Amaleqites—because my men had compassion on the best sheep and the cattle, in order to sacrifice them to your god Yahweh,” Sha’ul replied. “Everything else we burned.”

c

**

“Stop,” Shmu’el said to Sha’ul. “Let me tell you what Yahweh said to me last night.”

P33

“Go on.”

—
“Isn’t it true,” Shmu’el continued, “that even though you think very little of yourself, you are the head of all the tribes of Yisra’el, and that Yahweh has anointed you as king over Yisra’el? Yahweh sent you on a campaign, ordering you, ‘Go and destroy the wrong-doers—Amaleq—fighting against them until you finish them off.’ So why didn’t you obey Yahweh’s orders? Instead, you dove greedily on the victory spoils, and as Yahweh sees it, acted wrongly.”

P33,1

a

—
Sha’ul replied, “Here’s how I followed Yahweh’s orders: I carried out the campaign that Yahweh ordered me on. I brought him Agag the king of Amaleq, while putting the Amaleqi people to death by fire. My men took some sheep and cattle from the victory spoils to be a first-offering of the ban—to sacrifice them to your god Yahweh in Gilgal.”

P33,2

—
Shmu’el countered, “Does Yahweh take as much pleasure in whole-offerings and sacrifices as he does in men obeying his orders? Consider: ‘Obedience is better than making sacrifices—listening carefully is preferable to the fat of rams.’ Indeed: ‘Rebelliousness results from errors in divination—iniquity from pressing the teraphim too hard.’

P33,3

a

b

Because you rejected Yahweh's order, he now rejects you from being king!"

P33,4 "I've done wrong," Sha'ul admitted. "Indeed, I have transgressed both Yahweh's command and your orders, for I was afraid of my men and listened to their suggestion. Therefore I beg you, please forgive my error. Come back with me so that I might prostrate myself before Yahweh."

"I won't go back with you," Shmu'el said, "for you have rejected Yahweh's order, and now Yahweh has rejected you from being king over Yisra'el!"

P33,5 As Shmu'el turned around to leave, Sha'ul grabbed at the sleeve of his tunic and tore it.

P33,6 Shmu'el said to him, "Today Yahweh has torn the kingship of Yisra'el away from you, and he will give it one of your compatriots—someone better than you!"

P33,7 "Moreover, the Glorious One of Yisra'el doesn't deceive men, and he
a doesn't change his mind, for he is not a human to be changing his mind."

"I have done a grievous wrong. Please now, I beg you, honor me before the elders of my people and before Yisra'el. Come back with me so that I might prostrate myself before your god Yahweh!" And so Shmu'el did follow Sha'ul back, and Sha'ul did prostrate himself before Yahweh.

P33,8 Shmu'el demanded, "Bring me Agag, the king of Amaleq."

a Agag came to him in shackles. "Truly," he stated, "death may be bitter, but it is fleeting."

P33,9 "Your sword made women childless," Shmu'el pronounced, "but now
a your mother will be even more bereaved than them!" And then he cut Agag down with his sword right there in Gilgal in front of Yahweh's temple.

P33,10 Shmu'el then went back to Ramah, while Sha'ul went home to Gib'ah.

For the remainder of his life, Shmu'el never again saw Sha'ul, for he was sorely disappointed in him. Yahweh, meanwhile, regretted that he had confirmed Sha'ul as king over Yisra'el.

**

Yahweh said to Shmu'el, "How long are you going to go around lamenting over Sha'ul, when I've already rejected him from being king over Yisra'el? Go fill your horn with oil. I'm going to send you to Yishai the Beth-Lehemite, for I have seen among his sons the one who will my king."

P34 [1.16]

a

"How can I go?" Shmu'el replied. "If Sha'ul hears, he'll kill me."

"Take a young calf with you," Yahweh said, "and say that you've come to make a sacrifice to Yahweh. You should invite Yishai to the sacrifice—then I'll tell you what to do. The one whom I point out to you is who you should anoint for me."

Shmu'el did what Yahweh said. When he arrived in Beth-Lehem, the town's elders met him with trepidation, merely saying "Welcome."

"Greetings," he replied. "I've come to make a sacrifice to Yahweh. Purify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice."

Then he purified Yishai and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice. Now it happened that when they arrived, he noticed Eli'ab and thought, "Ah ha! Here, standing before Yahweh—his anointed one!"

b

But Yahweh said, "Don't look at his appearance or how tall he is, for I've rejected him. Because it's not what a man sees, for 'man sees with the eyes, but Yahweh sees with the heart.'"

P34,1

a

Yishai called to Abinadab, and made him pass in front of Shmu'el, but he thought, "Yahweh hasn't chosen this one either." Then Yishai made Shammah pass by, but Shmu'el thought, "Nor has Yahweh chosen this one."

After Yishai made seven sons pass in front of Shmu'el, Shmu'el said to him, "Yahweh hasn't chosen any of these."

Then Shmu'el added, "Is this all the boys?"

"There's still one more—the youngest. He's tending the sheep right now."

"Quick—send for him and bring him here," Shmu'el said to Yishai.

b

“For we won’t go back until he gets here.”

Yishai sent word and had him brought there—he was ruddy, as well as handsome and good-looking.

**

P35 a “Go on—anooint him,” Yahweh said, “for this is the one.”

Shmu’el took the horn of oil, and anoointed him as his brothers clustered round. Yahweh’s spirit swept down into Dawid, starting on that day and staying from then on. Right away, Shmu’el left and went back to Ramah.

b At the same time that all this was happening, Yahweh’s spirit left Sha’ul and a bad spirit sent by Yahweh began attacking him. Sha’ul’s servants said to him, “Look here—one of God’s bad spirits seems to be attacking you. Please, we beg our lord, let him say to his servants here before him, ‘Go find a man who is skilled at playing music on the lyre.’ That way when one of God’s bad spirits affects you, he can play for you and make you better.”

**

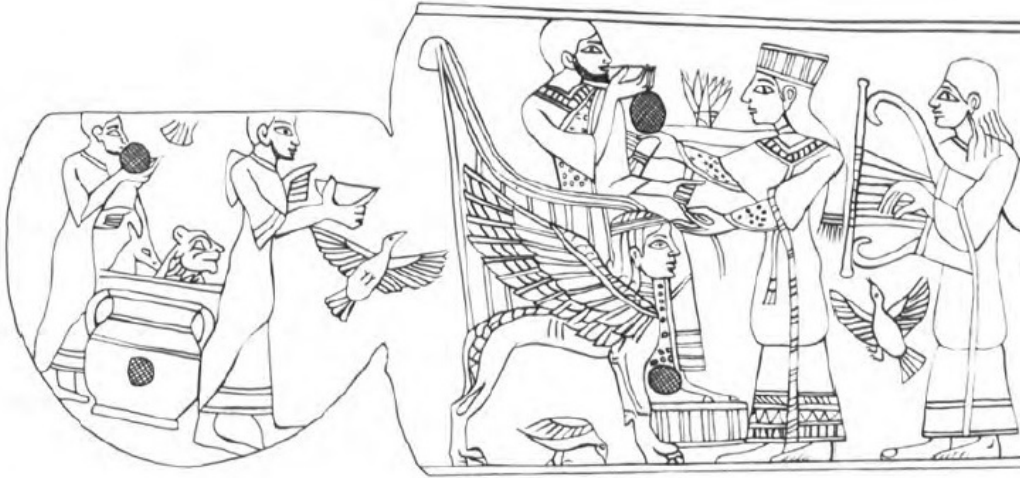
P36 So Sha’ul said to his servants, “Please do that for me—look for a man who plays stringed instruments especially well and bring him to me.”

a One of the youths answered, “I know!—I noticed that one of the sons of Yishai the Beth-Lehemite is skilled at playing stringed instruments. An excellent warrior and soldier, clever with words, and handsome—Yahweh is with him.”

So Sha’ul sent messengers to Yishai, and demanded, “Send me your son Dawid—the one out with the sheep.”

Yishai fetched a homer of bread, a jar of wine and one young goat, and then sent them with his son Dawid to Sha’ul. So Dawid went to Sha’ul and stood in his service. Sha’ul loved him very much, and made Dawid his equipment bearer. Thereupon Sha’ul sent a message to Yishai, “Please allow Dawid to stay in my service, for he pleases me very much.”

Whenever God’s bad spirit would affect Sha’ul, Dawid would take the lyre and begin playing, giving Sha’ul relief and making it better for him, with the result that the bad spirit would leave Sha’ul.



"Whenever God's bad spirit would affect Sha'ul, Dawid would take the lyre and begin playing..."

Figure 4: The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 4, no. 2b (detail). Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

**

The Philishtines mustered their troops for battle. They met up at Sokoh, which is part of Yehudah, and camped between Sokoh and Azaqah, in the plain of Ephes-Dammim. At the same time, Sha'ul and the Yisra'elites gathered together and camped in the Terebrinth Valley. They prepared their battle lines against the Philishtines. The Philishtines were standing atop the hill on one side, and the Yisra'elites were standing atop the hill on the other side, with a valley between them.

P37 [1.17]

A champion warrior ventured out from the Philishtine encampments, with his shield bearer walking directly in front of him. The warrior's name was Golyath from Gath, and he was six cubits and a span tall. He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he wore plaited armor weighing five thousand sheqels in solid bronze. A bronze greave covered his loins, and a bronze javelin was slung across his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was as big as a weaver's beam, and its blade weighed six hundred sheqels of solid iron.

a
b
c

d He took his position, and then called out to the Yisra'elite battle lines, "Why are you coming out here to set up for battle? Am I not the great Philishtine warrior, and you mere slaves of Sha'ul? Choose a man to represent you and have him come down here to face me! If he can prevail in our fight and kill me, then we will become your slaves. But if I myself prevail and kill him, then you will become our slaves and serve us.

"Here I am right now," the Philishtine continued, "taunting the Yisra'elite battle-lines! Give me someone so that we can fight each other!" When Sha'ul and all the Yisra'elites heard the Philishtine's taunts, they were terrified and grew demoralized.

**

P38 Dawid was the son of a certain Ephrathite from Beth-Lehem in Yehudah whose name was Yishai and who had eight sons. This man was much esteemed and eminent among men back in the time of Sha'ul. Yishai's three oldest sons left home and followed Sha'ul to war. Their
a names were Eli'ab (the first-born), Abinadab (his second-born), and Shammah (the third-born). Dawid was the youngest son. Now as the three oldest sons had followed Sha'ul to war...

—

P38,1 ... Dawid would regularly go back and forth between Sha'ul's army and tending his father's sheep in Beth-Lehem.

For forty days, the Philishtine went out, each morning and each evening, to take his stand against the Yisra'elites.

**

P39 Yishai said to his son Dawid, "Please take your brothers an ephah of this roasted barley and ten loaves of this bread—run it to your brothers at the army's encampment. And these ten blocks of cheese—take them to the commanding general. Check to see how your brothers are doing, and get a pledge from them that they're okay."

At this time, Sha'ul, the three brothers, and the entire Yisra'elite army were in the Terebrinth Valley fighting against the Philishtines.

—

P39,1 Dawid set out early in the morning, left the sheep with one of their

keepers, loaded his things, and went to the camp, just as his father Yishai had told him to. As he arrived at the entrenchment, the army was going out to its battle-lines, shouting war cries as they went. Yisra'el and the Philishtines took their places, battle-line facing battle-line. Dawid left the baggage behind with one of the porters and ran to the battle-lines. Upon arriving, he greeted his brothers. While he was still speaking with them, a champion warrior—Golyath the Philishtine, from the town of Gath—ventured out from the Philishtine lines and spoke words similar to what he had done previously while Dawid was within ear-shot.

Every one of the Yisra'elites, when they saw the man, turned from him in terror. The Yisra'elites were saying to one another:

“Did you all see that man venture out?”

“Yes, the only reason he came out was to taunt Yisra'el.”

“Certainly whoever kills him, the king will grant that man great riches and wealth!”

“He'll also give him his daughter!”

“And he'll exempt his father's family from all taxes in Yisra'el!”

**

Dawid said to the men who were standing there with him, “What will be done for the man who kills this Philishtine and rids Yisra'el of this humiliation? Really, who does this Philishtine dickhead think he is to stand there and taunt the troops of the living god?”

The Yisra'elite fighters told him the same things they were saying earlier about what would be done for the man who killed him. When Dawid's oldest brother Eli'ab overheard him talking with the men, he became furious with him.

“Why in the world did you come down here? Who did you leave your 'little flock of sheep' with there in wilderness? I can see your insolence and your idiotic plan! Yes, it was to see the fighting that you came down here.”

“What have I done now?” Dawid protested. “This isn't allowed?” He turned aside from Eli'ab to face another group right there, and asked the same question that he had asked earlier. The troops replied with an answer just like the first answer he had received. And so word



"Whenever a cougar—or even a bear—would come and take one of the sheep from the flock..."

Figure 5: The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 22, no. 125b (detail). Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

passed down the battle-lines about what Dawid had said; when it was reported to Sha'ul, he sent for Dawid.

Dawid said to Sha'ul, "Don't let the men's will falter. Allow your servant to go and fight this Philistine."

"You can't go and fight with this Philistine," Sha'ul replied. "You're just a boy, whereas he's been a mighty warrior from his youth."

P40,1 "Your servant has been a shepherd for his father, living with the sheep," Dawid said to Sha'ul. "Whenever a cougar—or even a bear—would come and take one of the sheep from the flock, I would go out after it and kill it and so save the sheep from being eaten. And if it attacked me, I would grab it by the throat, strike it down and kill it! Indeed, your servant has killed both cougars and bears—and now this Philistine dickhead is going to be even worse off than one of them, for he has taunted the troops of the living god!"

P40,2 Dawid continued, "Yahweh himself saved me from the claws of the lion and the bear—and now he's going to save me from the clutches of this Philistine too!"

P40,3 "Go!" Sha'ul said to Dawid. "And may Yahweh be with you!"
Sha'ul put his tunic on Dawid, set a bronze helmet on his head, and suited him with body armor. Dawid tied his sword around his tunic and then he tried to walk (for he had not yet tested the armor out). At once, he said to Sha'ul, "I can't go with these things on—I haven't tested them out," and then he took them off. Taking his sling in his hand, he picked out for himself five smooth stones from the nearby stream and put them in the shepherd's bag that he had with

him. And so with his bag and his sling in his hands, he approached the Philistine.

The Philistine began moving, coming closer and closer to Dawid, with his shield-bearer right in front of him. When the Philistine got a good look and saw Dawid, he belittled him, saying that he was just a pretty boy—who had fair skin to boot! The Philistine shouted at Dawid, “Am I some dog that you’re going to beat with a stick?” and then cursed him in the name of his gods. “Come here—so that I can turn you into fresh meat for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field!”

“You’ve come here to fight me with sword, spear and javelin,” Dawid shouted back. “But I’ve come to fight you in the name of Yahweh of Armies, god of the battle-ranks of Yisra’el—the one you’ve been taunting! Today Yahweh will deliver you into my hands, and then I’m going to kill you and cut off your head. Today’s the day that I’ll give the corpse of the Philistine army to the birds above and to the animals here below—and so the whole world will know the power of Yisra’el’s god! Then everyone present here today will understand that Yahweh doesn’t need a sword or spear to achieve victory. Rather, the battle belongs to Yahweh, and he’s going to give you into our hands!”

P40,4

The Philistine immediately started his move; at the same time that he was drawing near to attack Dawid, Dawid quickly began running down the battle line to attack the Philistine. He stuck his hand into his bag, took out a stone, and then slung it violently at the Philistine, striking him squarely in the forehead. As the stone sunk into his forehead, he crumpled to the ground face-first. And so Dawid bested the Philistine with just a sling and a stone. He struck the Philistine down and killed him, despite not being armed with a sword.

P40,5

Dawid then ran over, and stood beside the Philistine. Grabbing hold of the sword, he slipped it from its scabbard, quickly finished him off, and then cut off his head. When the Philistines saw that their mighty warrior was dead, they turned and fled.

The Yisra’elite and Yehudean soldiers jumped up from their battle lines, and screaming out their war-cries, chased after the Philistines as far as Gay’ in one direction and as far as the gates of Eqrn in the other. The Sha’arayim road all the way to Gath and to Eqrn was

littered with corpses of the fallen Philishtines. Then the Yisra'elites returned from their violent pursuit of the Philishtines and plundered their camp. After stowing the Philistine's weaponry in his tent, Dawid picked up his head and took it to Yerushalem.

P40,6 When Sha'ul saw Dawid going out to confront the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commanding general of the army, "Whose kid is that, Abner?"

"By your life, king, I have no idea," Abner replied.

"Well then," the king said, "go ask around and find out whose kid that is."

P40,7 Once Dawid had come back from fighting the Philistine, Abner found him and brought him to Sha'ul, with the Philistine's head in his hand.

"Whose son are you, boy?" Sha'ul asked him.

"The son of your servant, Yishai the Beth-Lehemite," Dawid answered.

[1.18] Just as Dawid was finishing speaking to Sha'ul, Yonathan's soul attached itself to Dawid's, and Yonathan loved him as much as he loved himself. On that day, Sha'ul took him and didn't allow him to return home to his family. Yonathan and Dawid made a pact, because Yonathan loved Dawid so much. Yonathan took off the robe that he was wearing and gave it to Dawid, as well as his broad-coat—even giving him his sword, his bow, and his belt.

a b Whenever Dawid would go out on any mission that Sha'ul sent him on, he would have success. As a result, Sha'ul appointed him as an officer in the military—an outcome that delighted all the people as well as Sha'ul's officials.

**

P41 Now it happened that when they entered town upon Dawid's return from killing the Philistine, women from every town in Yisra'el came out singing and dancing, greeting Sha'ul the king with tambourines, merriment, and triangles. The joyful women sang:

“Sha’ul has slain thousands—and Dawid tens of thousands!”

Sha’ul grew very angry because it seemed so unfair to him. He complained, “They gave Dawid tens of thousands, but to me they only gave thousands.” (At that time, however, he was still firmly in control of the kingship.) And so from that day onward, Sha’ul was continually eyeing Dawid with suspicion.

On the next day, a bad spirit from God rushed into Sha’ul and threw him into a frenzy right there in the middle of the palace. Dawid at the time was playing the lyre—as was his daily custom—when suddenly, Sha’ul appeared with a spear in his hand. Sha’ul then threw the spear, as he screamed, “I’ll run Dawid through with this—right into the wall!” Twice, however, Dawid managed to dodge him.

P41,1

Sha’ul felt threatened by Dawid because Yahweh was with him, whereas he had turned away from Sha’ul. So Sha’ul dismissed him from his personal staff, and instead appointed him as one of the generals in his army, where he regularly carried out missions in full view of the public.

a

And so it happened that Dawid was successful in all of his endeavors, for Yahweh was with him. When Sha’ul saw how extraordinarily successful he was, he became even more intimidated by him. At the same time, all Yisra’el and Yehudah loved Dawid, for he was regularly performing missions in full view of them.

P41,2

**

Sha’ul said to Dawid, “Here’s my oldest daughter, Merab—I’d like to give her to you as a wife. However, you must first prove to me that you are worthy by fighting Yahweh’s battles.” For Sha’ul thought to himself, “I’m not going to put my hand against him—let the Philishtines do it.”

P42

“Who am I,” Dawid said to Sha’ul, “and who are my kinfolk—my father’s clan—in Yisra’el that I should be the king’s son-in-law?” However, at the time when Merab Sha’ulsdaughter was supposed to be

P42,1

given to Dawid, she was instead given as a wife to Adri'el the Meholahite.

Now Mikal Sha'ulsdaughter was in love with Dawid. When Sha'ul was told about this, he realized this could be advantageous for him. Sha'ul thought, "If I give her to him, she can be the way I trap him, for I'll get the Philishtines to oppose him."

Sha'ul said to Dawid, "Today you'll have a second chance to make yourself my son-in-law."

Sha'ul then ordered his servants, "Speak to Dawid in secret, as follows: 'Look, the king really likes you, and all his servants love you. Now's your chance—make a pact with the king to be his son-in-law!'"

^a When Sha'ul's servants said exactly those things to Dawid, he replied, "Don't you think it would be a dishonor to the king for me to become his son-in-law, given that I am such a poor and insignificant man?"

Sha'ul's servants reported back to him, saying "Dawid replied in such and such a way."

Sha'ul said, "Here's what you should say to Dawid: 'The king has no desire for a dowry, except one hundred Philistine foreskins obtained by taking vengeance against the king's enemies.'" For Sha'ul was plotting a way to make Dawid fall into the Philishtines' hands. When his servants relayed these words to Dawid, he liked the idea of becoming the king's son-in-law before the year was over.

Right away, Dawid ventured out with his troops and killed two hundred Philistine men. Dawid brought back their foreskins, which served to fulfill for the king the terms of the royal marriage agreement; and so Sha'ul gave his daughter Mikal to him in marriage.

P42,2 — Observing what had happened, Sha'ul now understood that Yahweh was with Dawid. Moreover, at the same time, Mikal Sha'ulsdaughter had fallen in love with him.

Sha'ul's fear of being around Dawid grew all the more, and he was actively opposing Dawid each and every day.

**

P43 The Philistine generals continued to campaign against the Yisra'elites; and each time they marched out, Dawid would have more success

against them than any of Sha'ul's officers. As a result, his reputation was second to none.

a

Sha'ul informed his son Yonathan and his officers that he was going to have Dawid killed. (Recall, however, that Yonathan Sha'ulsson was very close to Dawid.) As a result, Yonathan said to Dawid, "My father Sha'ul is actively trying to have you killed. So you must be on your guard this morning. Go sit down in the shelter and hide. I'll go out and stand by my father's side in the field where you'll be hiding, and I will speak to him about you. I'll see what his plan is and then let you know."

P43,1 [1.19]

Yonathan spoke favorably about Dawid to his father Sha'ul: "The king ought not to wrong his servant Dawid, for he hasn't wronged you. Indeed, his actions have benefited you very much—he risked his life and killed the Philistine. And then Yahweh won a great victory for all Yisra'el—which you were elated over when you saw it. So why are you going to shed the blood of an innocent man, by having Dawid killed for no reason?"

P43,2

Sha'ul heeded Yonathan's plea, and swore, "As Yahweh lives, he won't be put to death." Yonathan summoned Dawid and related the entire conversation to him.

Then Yonathan brought Dawid back to Sha'ul, and he served at his court just as he had previously.

Meanwhile, the war raged on. Dawid marched out and battled the Philistines, slaughtering a great many of them before they turned and fled.

P43,3

Then an evil spirit from Yahweh entered Sha'ul while he was sitting in his house, spear in hand, as Dawid was playing the lyre. Sha'ul attempted to run Dawid through with the spear and pin him to the wall, but he slipped away from Sha'ul. The spear hit the wall as Dawid fled. That very night he ran away.

**

Sha'ul sent messengers to Dawid's house with orders to stand guard over him so that he could be executed the following morning. Dawid's

P44 a

wife Mikal warned him, "If you don't run for your life tonight, you'll be executed tomorrow." Mikal lowered Dawid through the window, and then, going on his way, he took flight and escaped. Mikal then took the teraphim and placed them on the bed, at the same time setting a goat's-hair quilt where his head was supposed to be and covering all of it over with some clothing.

P44,1 When Sha'ul sent messengers to take Dawid away, she said, "He's sick."

P44,2 Sha'ul sent the messengers back to see Dawid and ordered them, "Bring him back to me on his bed so that I can have him put to death." When the messengers entered the house, they discovered it was just teraphim on the bed, and a goat's-hair quilt in place of his head.

P44,3 Sha'ul asked Mikal, "Why have you deceived me like this—sending my enemy away so that he could escape?"

"He said to me, 'Let me go! Why should I kill you?'" Mikal answered.

a And so Dawid fled and escaped. He went to Shmu'el at Ramah and told him everything that Sha'ul had done to him. Then both he and Shmu'el left, and stayed in the nearby pastures.

When it was reported to Sha'ul, "We've located Dawid—he's in the pastures near Ramah," he sent messengers to take Dawid away. They noticed a band of prophets chanting in a trance-like state while Shmu'el stood there overseeing them, when suddenly a divine spirit came upon Sha'ul's messengers and they too became entranced and began chanting. When this was reported to Sha'ul, he sent another group of messengers, and they also became entranced and started chanting.

P44,4 Sha'ul tried again and sent a third group of messengers, but they became entranced and started chanting as well.

Then he himself went to Ramah. When he arrived at the great cistern in the village of Seku, he asked, "Where around here can I find Shmu'el and Dawid?"

"Look in the pastures around Ramah."

As he was walking to the pastures there, a divine spirit came upon him too, and as a result he was chanting in a trance-like state the entire way until he reached the pastures around Ramah. Moreover, he then stripped off his clothes, and—while entranced and chanting in front of Shmu’el—lay down there naked for the whole day and the whole night. That’s why they say, “Is Sha’ul also one of the prophets?”

**

Dawid fled from the pastures around Ramah, and, upon his return, said to Yehonathan, “What have I done? What was my sin? What was my crime against your father that he is seeking my life?” P45 [1.20]

“Damn it! You won’t die,” Yehonathan answered. “Look—my father doesn’t do anything, large or small, without revealing it to me. So why should he hide this matter from me? It’s impossible!” a

Dawid strongly disagreed, “Your father certainly knows that you treat me very favorably, so he must have told himself, ‘Yehonathan must not learn about this, as it would upset him.’ Really, as Yahweh lives—and as you live—there is only a single step between me and death.” b

“Just tell me what you really want, and I’ll do it,” Yehonathan replied. c

**

Dawid said to Yehonathan, “Look, tomorrow is the new moon, which is when I usually sit with the king for dinner. Once you let me go, I’ll hide out in the fields until the evening of the third day of the month. Now, if your father notices I’m absent, you should say, ‘Actually, Dawid excused himself to run home to Beth-Lehem, for his extended family is there celebrating the annual sacrifice.’ If he responds, ‘Good,’ then it will okay for your servant. But if he really does get angry, then you’ll know that he has plotted something evil. You must act with kindness toward your servant, for you had your servant enter a pact with you—a pact secured with an oath to Yahweh. If I am guilty of anything, then you yourself should put me to death; but why in the world should you hand me over to your father?” P46

**

P47 a “Damn you!” Yehonathan replied. “If I really did find out that my father has plotted something evil against you, how could I not tell you about it?!”

—

P47,1 “Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?” Dawid asked Yehonathan.

—

P47,2 “Come,” Yehonathan said, “let’s go out to the field.” And so the two of them went out to the field.

—

P47,3 Yehonathan said to Dawid, “I swear by Yahweh, the god of Yisra’el, that I will observe my father closely tomorrow on the third of the month, and if it looks good for Dawid, then I won’t send word to you, but will tell you personally. (May Yahweh do likewise for Yehonathan now and always.) But if this evil plan against you pleases my father, then I will tell you personally and send you on your way so that you can leave safely. May Yahweh be with you just as he was with my father! If I do not do so, then as long as I am still living, you have no obligation to act with kindness toward me (as we swore before Yahweh)—I won’t die. May you never break off your kindness from my family, and may Yahweh remove each and every one of Dawid’s enemies from the face of the earth. And if Yehonathan does break with Dawid’s family, may Yahweh exact retribution from Dawid’s enemies.”

h Yehonathan added to the oath that he was swearing to Dawid, because of his love for him (for he loved him with every fiber of his being):

—

P47,4 “Tomorrow is the new moon. Your absence will be noticed, as your seat will be empty. Wait for three days, and then come back quickly, going to the place where you hid on the day of that incident. Sit down next to the worn-down rock. When I shoot three arrows off to the side to make a target for myself, then you must pay attention—I’m going to send the servant off and say ‘Go and find the arrows!’ If I say to the servant, ‘Look here—the arrows are a little closer in from where you are, towards me. Pick them up and come back,’ that means you’re safe and there is nothing to worry about, as Yahweh lives. But if I say this to the servant, ‘The arrows are a little further from where you

are,’ then go, for that means that Yahweh has sent you away. Now as for this matter that you and I have discussed together, may Yahweh forever keep it just between us.”

d

—
So Dawid hid himself in the field. On day of the new moon, the king sat down in front of his food to dine. The king sat in his customary place, in the seat by the wall. Yehonathan stood up as Abner sat down beside the king, but Dawid’s place was empty. Sha’ul didn’t say anything that day, for he thought, “There’s a chance that he’s not clean. Yes, perhaps he’s not clean.”

P47,5

—
Then on the second day of the month, when Dawid’s place was empty...

P47,6

**

Sha’ul said to his son Yehonathan, “Why didn’t Yishai-son come to table either yesterday or today?”

P48 a

“Actually,” Yehonathan answered, “Dawid asked me to be excused to go to Beth-Lehem. He said, ‘Please let me go, for we have a family sacrifice in town—it’s something my brother demanded that I attend. So then, if my request is agreeable to you, I’d like to slip away to see my brothers.’ That’s why he hasn’t come to the king’s table.”

—
Sha’ul became furious with Yehonathan, shouting at him “You double-crossing bastard! Do you think I don’t know you’re siding with Yishai-son? In the end, it will be to your shame—and the shame of that cunt your mother! Because for as long as Yishai-son lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingship will be secure! Now then, send the guard and bring him to me—because he deserves to die!”

P48,1

a b
c

—
Yehonathan answered his father Sha’ul, “Why should he be put to death? What has he done?”

P48,2

Sha’ul hurled the spear at him, trying to kill him. That was when Yehonathan realized that his father was determined to kill Dawid.

—
Yehonathan left the table in a rage, and he didn’t eat anything on the

P48,3

second day of the month, because he was anguished for Dawid—and because his father had humiliated him.

P48,4 In the morning, Yehonathan went out to the field at the time agreed with Dawid, accompanied by a young servant-boy. He said to the boy, “Run—go find the arrows which I’m going to shoot!” As the boy started running, he shot the arrow well beyond him. When the boy arrived at the place where Yehonathan had shot the arrow, he called out after the boy, “Isn’t the arrow a little further out from you?”

“Hurry up!” Yehonathan shouted. “Be quick! Don’t just stand there!” Yehonathan’s servant-boy collected the arrows and brought them to his lord. Now as for the boy, he didn’t know anything; only Dawid and Yehonathan knew what had happened.

P48,5 Yehonathan gave his things to his servant-boy and said, “Go—take
a this back to town.” As the boy left, Dawid rose up near the south side of the rock and then dropped to the ground, prostrating himself three times. The two friends kissed each other and cried over one another, until Dawid was overcome with emotion.

b “Travel safely!” Yehonathan said to Dawid. “As the two of us swore together in Yahweh’s name—‘May Yahweh keep you and me united, and keep your children and mine united, for all time!’”

**

P49 [1.21] Dawid left straight away, while Yehonathan went back into town. Dawid went to Nob to see Ahimelek the priest. Fearful of meeting Dawid, Ahimelek said to him, “Why are you here by yourself, and no one with you?”

Dawid replied, “The king ordered me on a mission and said, ‘No one must know anything about the mission that I’m sending you on and that I’ve ordered you to carry out.’ As for my retainers, I simply informed them that I was going to ‘such and such a place’. Anyway, what do you have at hand here? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever you can find.”

a “I don’t have any unconsecrated bread at hand,” the priest answered Dawid, “but there is some consecrated bread, assuming the serving-lads have managed to keep themselves from women.”

Dawid replied, “Yes, in the past we kept ourselves from women whenever I went out on a mission; moreover, my retainers’ equipment was consecrated, even when the journey was unconsecrated. Currently also, it’s the same—whatever is in our baggage is always consecrated.”

P50 a

The priest gave him some consecrated bread, for there was no bread there except the offering-bread that had been removed from Yahweh’s presence, having been replaced with freshly-baked bread at the time it was taken away.

b

(Now one of Sha’ul’s officials was there that day, performing a vigil before Yahweh—his name was Do’eg the Edomite, the head of the Sha’ul’s shepherds.)

“There isn’t a spear or sword at hand, is there?” Dawid asked Ahimelek. “Because I didn’t take either my sword or any of my equipment with me, for the king’s issue was urgent.”

The priest replied, “The sword of Golyath the Philistine, whom you killed in Terebrinth valley—it’s here, wrapped up in the cloth behind the ephod. If you want to take it, go ahead, because there’s nothing else here except that.”

P50,1

“There’s nothing better than that,” Dawid said. “Please give it to me!”

P50,2

Dawid left right away and resumed his flight that day from Sha’ul by going to Akish, the king of Gath. Akish’s servants said to him, “Isn’t this Dawid, king of the land? Isn’t he the one whom they celebrated with singing and dancing, saying ‘Sha’ul has slain thousands—and Dawid tens of thousands?’”

As Dawid weighed these words carefully in his mind, he became very fearful of Akish, the king of Gath. And so he changed his behavior when he was in their sight, always acting crazily around them, making marks on the doors of the town gate and dribbling his spittle down his beard.

Akish said to his servants, “Look here—you can see this man is not in his right mind. Why did you bring him to me? Do I lack for crazy people that you have to bring me this idiot who is constantly annoying me with his craziness? Is this the kind of person who should join my

P50,3

a

b

retinue?"

**

P51 [1.22] From there, Dawid went to hide out at Edulam cave. When his brothers and his father's clan heard what had happened, they went down there to see him. Every man who was in dire straits, or who was being pursued by his creditors, or who was bitter over his situation joined up with Dawid and he became their leader. Those with him numbered about four hundred.

From there Dawid went to Mitspah in Mo'ab and said to the king of Mo'ab, "Please, I beg you, let my father and mother come out here to stay with you until I learn what God is going to do to me." And so he left them with the king of Mo'ab, and they stayed there with him the entire time that Dawid was hiding out in the mountains.

P51,1 The prophet Gad said to Dawid, "You shouldn't stay in this mountain hide-out. Leave and go back to the land of Yehudah." So Dawid left and went to Hareth Woods.

P51,2 When Sha'ul heard that Dawid and the men with him had been discovered (at that time Sha'ul was living in Gib'ah under the tamarisk tree up on the heights), he had his spear in his hand, and all his men were standing around him. Sha'ul said to the men standing there, "Listen here, Binyaminites, Yishaiisson will definitely be giving all of you fields and vineyards. Yes, he's going to make you all generals and commanders. Because all of you have conspired against me! Not a single person told me about my son making a pact with Yishaiisson.

a Not one of you was concerned enough for me to tell me that my son had set up my servant to ambush me—on this very day!"

P51,3 Do'eg the Edomite, who was supervising Sha'ul's men, answered, "I saw Yishaiisson arriving at Nob, to meet Ahimelek Ahitubsson. He sought an oracle from Yahweh on his behalf, and at the same time gave him provisions. He also gave him Golyath's sword."

The king sent men to summon the priest Ahimelek Ahitubsson and his clan, all of whom were priests at Nob. They all went to the king.

“Listen closely, Ahitubsson,” Sha’ul said.

P51,4 a

“Yes, my lord, I’m right here.”

“Why,” Sha’ul accused him, “have you conspired against me—you and Yishai—by giving him food and weapons, and by seeking an oracle on his behalf so that he might set up an ambush for me on this very day!?”

“Of all your servants,” Ahimelek answered, “who is as loyal as Dawid—the king’s own son-in-law, head of your personal body-guard, and highly respected among those in your retinue? It’s true that I did endeavor today to seek an oracle from God on his behalf. May I be damned, however, if the king should hold this matter against his servant, or against any of his clan. For your servant knew absolutely nothing about this.”

P51,5

“You shall surely die, Ahimelek!” the king cried. “You and your entire clan!” Then the king said to the royal escorts standing nearby, “Go on! Put Yahweh’s priests to death, for they also are in league with Dawid! They knew he was fleeing, and they didn’t tell me!” The king’s men, however, were unwilling to lay a hand in violence against Yahweh’s priests.

Then the king said to Do’eg, “You—go on! Attack the priests!” Then Do’eg the Edomite, acting on his own, turned and attacked the priests, killing that day eighty-five men who carried the linen ephod. And as for the priests’ town, Nob, he massacred its inhabitants, killing men and women, children and infants, even slaughtering cattle, asses, and sheep.

P51,6

However, one of Ahimelek Ahitubsson’s sons—whose name was Ebyathar—escaped and fled to Dawid. Ebyathar told Dawid that Sha’ul had killed Yahweh’s priests. Dawid replied, “I knew that Do’eg the Edomite was there that day. But because it was obvious he was going to tell Sha’ul about me, I avoided everyone from your clan. Stay here with me—don’t be afraid, for whoever is looking for me will also be looking for you. But you will be under close protection here with me.”

a

Dawid received a report: “Take note—the Philistines are now fighting

P51,7 [1.23]

- a in Qe'ilah; in addition, they're plundering the grain stores."
b Dawid sought an oracle from Yahweh, asking "Should I go and attack these Philishtines?"
-

P51,8 Yahweh answered him, "Go. Attack the Philishtines and save Qe'ilah."
But Dawid's men objected, "Look, we're already afraid for our
a safety here in Yehudah—it'll be even worse if we go to Qe'ilah to the Philishtines' battle-lines!"

P51,9 So Dawid went back and sought another oracle from Yahweh.
"Go on!" Yahweh answered him. "Head south to Qe'ilah, for I am going to put the Philishtines right into your hands!"

Dawid and his men went to Qe'ilah and fought against the Philishtines. They drove off their livestock and struck them hard, killing a great many men and saving the town's inhabitants.

P51,10 a (Now when Ebyathar Ahimeleksson fled to Qe'ilah to join Dawid, he brought the ephod with him.)

- b When Sha'ul received a report that Dawid had gone to Qe'ilah, he thought, "God has abandoned him, and put him right into my hands.
c Indeed, the doors are barred and he's trapped inside the town!" Sha'ul put the word out for the army to prepare for battle, to head south to Qe'ilah and besiege Dawid and his men.

Dawid, however, knew that Sha'ul was maliciously plotting against him. So he said to Ebyathar the priest, "Bring me the ephod."

P51,11 "Yahweh, god of Yisra'el," Dawid declared, "your servant has truly heard that Sha'ul is planning to go to Qe'ilah and destroy the town on account of me. Will Qe'ilah's leaders deliver me up to him? Will Sha'ul come here, just as your servant has heard? Yahweh, god of Yisra'el, I beg you, tell your servant!"

P51,12 a "Yes, he will come," Yahweh replied.

P51,13 "Will Qe'ilah's leaders deliver me and my men up to Sha'ul?"
"Yes, they will," Yahweh said.

P51,14 So Dawid and his men—about six hundred total—immediately left

Qe'ilah, travelling this way and that through the countryside, without any planned route. Meanwhile, Sha'ul received a report that Dawid had fled Qe'ilah, and he called off the campaign.

Dawid lived in fortified camps in the desert region, and in the hill country in the Ziph wilderness. Although Sha'ul continually searched for him, God didn't allow Dawid to fall into his hands.

Once when Dawid was in Horshah in the Ziph wilderness, he discovered that Sha'ul had come out in pursuit and was seeking to kill him.

—

Right away, Yehonathan Sha'ulsson went to see Dawid at Horshah. He gave him encouragement, invoking God's help, and saying, "Don't be afraid, for my father Sha'ul's forces won't find you. Instead, you will rule over Yisra'el, and I will be your viceroy. Even my father Sha'ul knows that this is so." The two of them then made a pact, calling Yahweh as witness. Dawid remained in Horshah, while Yehonathan went back home.

P51,15

a

—

Some men from Ziph travelled north to see Sha'ul at Gib'ah and reported, "The king should know that Dawid is currently hiding out among us in fortified camps near Horshah, on a hill in Hekilah—the one at the south end of the wilderness. So now, O king, whenever you would like to come down to Ziph, please do so, and we'll take responsibility for delivering him up to your majesty the king."

P51,16

"May you be blessed by Yahweh," Sha'ul replied, "for you've shown compassion toward me. Please go back and make ready again—study and observe the places where he goes on foot. Who has actually seen him there? Indeed, I've been told that he is extremely crafty. So observe and study all the hiding places where he usually hides out, and then come back to me with what you have found out for certain. Then I'll go with you. And if it so happens that he's in the area, I will make a thorough search for him with all the Yehudean troops at my disposal."

a

And so they departed straightaway, returning to Ziph in advance of Sha'ul. (At this time, Dawid and his men were in the wilds of Ma'on, on the plain just to the south of the Yeshimon wasteland.) Soon after, Sha'ul and his men came to search. When this was reported to Dawid, he made his way down from the rocky outcrops and camped in the

b

c

wilds of Ma'on. In turn, when Sha'ul learned this, he went to the wilds of Ma'on to chase after Dawid. Sha'ul walked around one side of the mountain while Dawid and his men were going around the other side. Dawid was desperate to slip away from Sha'ul, as Sha'ul and his men had begun encircling Dawid and his men, intent on capturing them.

Just then, a messenger came to Sha'ul, saying "Hurry! Come back! The Philishtines are raiding the land!" So Sha'ul turned back from pursuing Dawid, and went to engage the Philishtines. For that reason, they call that place Slippery Rock. From there Dawid traveled north, and stayed in hideouts in Eyn-Gedi.

P51,17 [1.24] As soon as Sha'ul had returned from fighting the Philishtines, he received the following report, "Dawid is here in the wilds of Eyn-Gedi."

P51,18 Sha'ul gathered three thousand men—the best in all Yisra'el—and went to look for Dawid and his men at the foot of Mountain Goat Cliffs. Along the way, he arrived at some sheep pens where there was a cave, and entered it to relieve his bowels. Now Dawid and his men at that time were occupying the recesses of that very cave.

Dawid's men said to him, "Look here—today is the day Yahweh meant when he said to you, 'Take note—I'm going to put your enemy right into your hands, and you can do with him however you see fit'." Dawid then got up and, working silently, cut off the corner of the robe that Sha'ul was wearing.

Immediately afterwards, however, Dawid was struck with remorse, precisely because he had cut off the corner of Sha'ul's robe. He said to his men, "I'm going to be damned by Yahweh for doing this thing to my lord, to Yahweh's anointed one—taking action against him like that—for he is Yahweh's anointed one." With those words, Dawid cut off his men, and stopped them from attacking Sha'ul. (Meanwhile, Sha'ul had gotten up, left the cave, and resumed his journey.)

P51,19 Right after that, Dawid exited the cave and called out after Sha'ul, "My lord, the king!" Sha'ul looked behind him to see Dawid bowing down to him, prostrate with his face to the ground.

P51,20 a Dawid said to Sha'ul, "Why do you listen to people's words when

they say, ‘Look here—Dawid is seeking to harm you’? Take note—this very day you saw with your own eyes how Yahweh put you right into my hands just now in the cave. I considered killing you, but instead had pity on you, thinking to myself, ‘I can’t attack my lord, for he is Yahweh’s anointed.’ Father—look! Really, look here at the corner of your robe, right here in my hand! For although I cut off the corner of your robe, I didn’t kill you. Look closely and understand—there is no harm or crime that I can be blamed for, and I haven’t wronged you. Yet you are continually hunting me down and trying to take my life! May Yahweh judge between you and me! May Yahweh take revenge on you for me—though I won’t lay a finger on you. Just as the old proverb says, ‘From evil people come evil things’—though I won’t lay a finger on you! Who has the king of Yisra’el come out to campaign against? Who are you chasing after? After a dead dog! After a single field-mouse! So let Yahweh serve as judge, and decide between you and me. Let him observe all this and argue my case—and vindicate me against you!”

b

**

When Dawid had finished speaking these words to Sha’ul, Sha’ul cried out, “Is that your voice, Dawid, my son?” and then wept. He said to Dawid, “You are a better man than me, for you have dealt with me fairly, whereas I have dealt unfairly with you. You yourself declared just now how you did right by me—how even though Yahweh delivered me up into your hands, you didn’t kill me. Indeed, ‘if a man happens upon his enemy, he should send him off with wishes for a successful journey.’ So may Yahweh reward you with success because of how you treated me today! Therefore—know this—I realize now that you really will become king and that the kingdom of Yisra’el will remain firmly under your control. So then, you must swear to me by Yahweh that you won’t wipe out my descendants after me, and that you won’t destroy my clan’s memorial to me.”

P52

a

b

c

Dawid swore such an oath to Sha’ul, and then Sha’ul returned home while Dawid and his men went back up to their hideout.

—

A short time later, Shmu’el died. All Yisra’el gathered together to mourn him, and then buried him at his home in Ramah. Immedi-

P52,1 [1.25]

ately thereafter, Dawid went down south and relocated to the Pa'ran wilderness.

**

P53 Now there was a certain man living in Ma'on whose main business
a was in Karmel. This man was very wealthy—he owned three thousand
sheep and one thousand goats. (At the time of this story, he was
shearing his sheep in Karmel.) This man's name was Nabal, and his
wife's name was Abigayil. Now Abigayil was extremely sensible, as
well as very beautiful; Nabal, on the other hand, was a very difficult
b man and unfair in his business dealings—a real Kalebbite.

While Dawid was in the wilderness, he heard that Nabal was
shearing his sheep. Dawid sent ten of his retainers, instructing them
as follows, "Go on up to Karmel, find Nabal and greet him on my
c behalf, saying 'As it is with myself, so I wish peace to you, peace
to your family, and peace to all that you own. Now, I've heard that
your men are presently shearing sheep for you; as you know, when
your shepherds were with us, we didn't mistreat them, and nothing
of theirs went missing the whole time that they were in Karmel. Ask
your men, and they'll tell you. And if you are satisfied with their
account of the good times we had together, then, I beg you, please
d give whatever you can to your servants, and to your son Dawid'."

Dawid's men went to Nabal; on behalf of Dawid they relayed to
him this whole message, word for word, and then paused.

Nabal answered Dawid's retainers, "Who is Dawid—who is this
Yishaiisson—that I should care? All I see right now is a bunch of slaves
running away from their masters. I'm going to take the bread and
water—as well as the meat that I've slaughtered for my shearers—and
I'm going to give all that to men whom I don't know?! Where in the
world do you get these ideas?!"

Dawid's men turned right around, and went back the way they
came. When they told Dawid everything that had happened, he said to
them, "Everyone, strap on your swords!" Each of his men strapped on
his sword, and Dawid strapped on his sword as well. They followed
Dawid north up to Karmel, roughly four hundred men in all, while
two hundred stayed behind with the equipment.

Meanwhile, one of the shepherds reported to Abigayil Nabalswife, “You should know, Dawid sent messengers from the wilderness to send his greetings to our lord, but he heaped abuse on them. These men were extremely good to us—we weren’t mistreated and we didn’t miss anything the entire time we traveled with them when we were out on the plains. They were a wall protecting us at night and by day the entire time we were with them grazing the sheep. So now, keep this in mind and consider what you should do, for there is trouble in store for our lord and his family—he was too foolish to speak reasonably to Dawid.”

Quickly going to work, Abigayil took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five previously slaughtered sheep, five se’ahs of roasted barley, one hundred bunches of raisins, and two hundred bunches of dried figs, and loaded it all on donkeys. Then she said to her servants, “Go ahead in front of me—I’ll be there coming right behind you.” At the same time, however, she didn’t tell her husband Nabal anything about this.

So there she was, riding on her ass, descending the hill in secret, while—unbeknownst to her—Dawid and his men were just opposite, coming down to meet her. Then she happened upon them! At just that moment Dawid was thinking to himself, “Ugh—it was for a lie that I protected everything this son-of-a-bitch owned out in the wilderness—nothing that belonged to him went missing, yet he repays me evil for good. So may God do to Dawid’s enemies—now and always!—if by morning out of all those who belong to him I spare even one man, pissing himself against a wall!”

When Abigayil saw Dawid, she leapt into action: she got off her donkey, threw herself down face first right in front of Dawid, and lay prostrate on the ground. She threw herself at his feet and cried, “I beg you, lord—I...—this wrongdoing... please, allow your maidservant to speak with you frankly. Please, listen closely to what your maidservant has to say. My lord ought not to give any thought to that despicable man, Nabal. For he’s just like his name—‘Fool’ is his name, and foolishness is all around him. But as for me, your maidservant—I didn’t see the men whom my lord sent. So now, please, as Yahweh lives—as you yourself live—I pray that Yahweh stop you from coming here and shedding blood to get your way. May your enemies be just like Nabal—as well as all those who seek to do my lord harm.

Now therefore, please accept these gifts that your maidservant has brought my lord, and let them be given to the men who have been travelling so long with my lord. Please forgive your maidservant's presumptuousness, for Yahweh will surely establish a lasting dynasty for my lord, for it is Yahweh's wars that my lord is fighting, and as long as you've lived, you've never been found guilty of any wrongdoing. If a man should rise up to give chase and seek to take your life, I pray that my lord's very self be kept safe inside the 'pouch of life' with Yahweh your god; as for the life of your enemies, may he sling it away out of the sling's pocket. So when Yahweh brings about for my lord all the good things he spoke concerning you, and makes you supreme leader over Yisra'el, don't let this plan of yours today—to shed blood for no reason and get your way—end up being something that will cause my lord remorse and weigh on his conscience. And when Yahweh rewards my lord in the future, may you remember your maidservant."

P53,1 "Blessed is Yahweh, the god of Yisra'el, who sent you today to meet me," Dawid replied to Abigail. "Blessed is your judgement, and blessed are you, because today you prevented me from coming here and shedding blood to get my way. Indeed, by the life of Yahweh, god of Yisra'el, who stopped me from harming you, I swear that if you had not been so quick to come and meet me, then by sunrise there wouldn't have been left to Nabal even one man, pissing himself against a wall."

a Dawid took from her everything that she had brought him, and
b said to her, "Travel safely back home. See—I heeded your request, and have done as you asked."

When Abigail returned home to Nabal, she found him inside the house hosting a drinking party that was fit for a king. Nabal was in an excellent mood, as he was exceedingly drunk. For that reason, she didn't tell him a single thing about the day's events until the next morning.

Then the next morning, once Nabal had recovered from his hang-over, his wife told him what had happened; immediately his heart stopped beating, and he froze up like a stone. And that's how he was for ten days, when Yahweh finally struck Nabal dead.

When Dawid heard that Nabal had died, he thought, “Blessed is Yahweh, who prosecuted my case over Nabal’s insult, and who stopped his servant from harm while putting Nabal’s own wrongdoing right back onto his head.”

Dawid then sent his men off with a message for Abigayil that he wanted to take her as his wife. Dawid’s men went to Karmel to meet Abigayil, and said to her, “Dawid sent us to you to take you back to be his wife.”

Abigayil immediately prostrated herself flat on the ground, and said, “Here I am—your maid, who is but a humble servant, fit for washing the feet of my lord’s own servants.” Then, acting quickly, Abigayil got up and mounted her donkey; with five girl-servants travelling at her side, she followed behind Dawid’s messengers and so became his wife.

In addition, Dawid took Ahino’am from Yizra’el, and the two of them together became his wives.

Meanwhile, Sha’ul gave Mikal—his daughter and Dawid’s wife—to Palti Layishsson who was from Gallim. P53,2

The Ziphites came to Sha’ul at Gib’ah, and said to him, “Are you aware that Dawid is hiding out in the Hekilah valley east of the desert wastelands?” Sha’ul immediately went down south to the Ziph wilderness, accompanied by three thousand of the best men in Yisra’el, to search for Dawid there in the wilderness. [1.26]

Sha’ul camped in the Hekilah valley east of the desert wastelands, at the side of the road. Dawid, who at this time was living in the wilderness, saw signs that Sha’ul had come after him to the wilderness. So Dawid sent out a scouting party, and then he knew for certain that Sha’ul had come. Acting quickly, Dawid went to the site where Sha’ul was camping, and saw the place where Sha’ul himself was sleeping, along with the general of his army, Abner Nersson—Sha’ul was sleeping in a wagon while his soldiers were camped on all sides of him.

Reacting to what he saw, Dawid said to Ahimelek the Hittite and Abiyshai Tseruyahsson (Yo’ab’s brother), “Who’ll go down with me to the camp to see Sha’ul?”

“I’ll go with you,” Abiyshai answered.

So Dawid and Abiyshai went down to the encampment during the night, and there was Sha'ul, lying fast asleep in the wagon, with his spear stuck firmly in the ground by his head, and Abner and the soldiers sleeping on all sides of him.

P53,3 Abiyshai said to Dawid, "Today God has put your enemy right into your hands. So now, please let me kill him with the spear—a single blow right into the ground. I won't need a second one."

"Don't you dare to mutilate him like that!" Dawid replied. "For who has ever attempted violence against Yahweh's anointed, and gotten away with it?"

**

P54 "I swear, as Yahweh lives," Dawid continued, "Yahweh shall surely strike him down dead—whether his day comes and he simply dies, or whether he goes into battle and is swept away. I'll be damned by Yahweh if I attempt violence against Yahweh's anointed. Now then, go ahead and take the spear by his head and the jug of water, and then let's get out of here."

So Dawid took the spear and the jar of water from beside Sha'ul's head and then they got out of there. There was no one who saw anything, no one who knew anything, no one who woke up—indeed, all of them were sound asleep, for Yahweh had put them under a deep sleeping spell. Dawid crossed to the other side of the valley and stood at the top of the hill at a distance, the space between them being quite wide.

Dawid then called out to the soldiers and to Abner Neresson, "Abner, won't you answer me?"

"Who are you that you call out to the king?" Abner asked.

**

P55 Dawid said to Abner, "You're a man, aren't you? Who in Yisra'el is your equal? So why didn't you protect your lord the king? One of my men actually snuck in to mutilate the king, your lord! As Yahweh lives, this is a terrible thing that you've done! Really, you all deserve to die—for you didn't protect your lord, Yahweh's anointed! Now

then, look around—where is the king’s spear and the jug of water that was by his head?”

Sha’ul then recognized Dawid’s voice. He cried, “Is that your voice, Dawid, my son?”

“Yes it is, my lord the king,” Dawid answered.

“What’s the reason,” he continued, “that my lord is chasing after his servant? What exactly have I done? What crime have I committed? So now, please, I beg that my lord the king hear what his servant has to say: if Yahweh has incited you against me, then let him be appeased with a minhah-offering; but if it’s human beings who have, then may they be damned in Yahweh’s sight, for today they have banished me from claiming my share in Yahweh’s chosen land, telling me, ‘Go—serve other gods!’ Therefore, may not a drop of my blood fall to the ground out of Yahweh’s sight. Really now, Yisra’el’s king has marched out to chase after a single field-mouse, as though he were a hawk hunting in the hills!”

“I’ve done wrong!” Sha’ul cried. “Come back, Dawid, my son! Really, I won’t wrong you again, for it’s a fact that you treated my life as precious today. I admit, I’ve acted foolishly, and made a very great error.”

“Here’s the king’s spear,” Dawid replied. “Have one of your retainers come over here and take it. May Yahweh repay each of us according to his virtue and loyalty. Because Yahweh put you in my hands today, but I refused to harm Yahweh’s anointed. So consider—just as your life was valuable in my eyes today, so I pray that my life be valuable in Yahweh’s eyes and that he save me from all adversity.”

**

Sha’ul said to Dawid, “You are blessed, my son Dawid. Indeed, because you really did treat me fairly, so you really will prevail.”

And so Dawid went on his way, and Sha’ul returned home.

**

Dawid thought to himself, “Now I might get snapped up one of these days into Sha’ul’s hands. There’s no good way out except for me to escape to the Philishtines’ country—then Sha’ul will despair of finding

me, for he'll still be looking for me within Yisra'el's borders. That's how I'll evade being captured by him."

a Having made up his mind, Dawid—along with the six hundred men who were with him—went to join up with Gath's king, Akish Ma'oksson. And so Dawid stayed with Akish in Gath—he and his men, along with each man's family, including Dawid's two wives, Ahino'am of Yizra'el and Abigayil Nabalswife of Karmel. Once Sha'ul had received a report that Dawid had fled to Gath, he didn't persist any longer in hunting him down.

—
P57,1 Dawid said to Akish, "If I have found favor with you, please grant me a place in one of the towns in the countryside where I can live. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?" And so on that day Akish gave him Tsiqlag. For that reason, Tsiqlag has belonged to the kings of Yehudah down to the present day.

**

P58 The length of time that Dawid lived in the Philishtine countryside
a was one year and four months. During that time, Dawid and his men went out raiding against the Geshurites, Gezerites, and Amaleqites (for those were the inhabitants of the region that is bounded on the north from Olam all the way to Shur, and as far as the land of Egypt in the south). When Dawid pillaged the countryside, he wouldn't spare the lives of any men or women, and he would take sheep, cattle, asses, camels, and garments.

b After he had returned from one such raid, and went to see Akish, Akish said to him, "You can't possibly have gone raiding today."

"Just in the southern desert regions," Dawid replied, "against Yehudah, against the Yerahme'elites, and against the Qeynites."

c For the entire time that Dawid lived in the Philishtine countryside,
d he didn't bring any men or women back alive to Gath—thinking to himself—"Lest they inform against us and say, 'Dawid did such and such, and such and such was his usual practice'."

As a result, Akish put his trust in Dawid, thinking, "He really has made himself odious to his people Yisra'el—he'll always be my servant."

**

Now it so happened during those days that the Philishtines mobilized their armies for battle, to fight against Yisra'el. Akish said to Dawid, "You do understand that you must join me on the march to the army's camp—you as well as your men—right?" P59 [1.28]

"Yes, absolutely," Dawid said. "You yourself know how your servant has acted."

"Definitely," Akish responded. "that's why I've decided to give you a permanent position as my personal bodyguard."

**

(Now after Shmu'el had died—and after all Yisra'el mourned him and buried him in his hometown Ramah—Sha'ul eradicated the necromancers and the diviners from the land.) P60

Having organized themselves for battle, the Philishtines marched out and camped at Shunem. Sha'ul, meanwhile, mobilized all the Yisra'elite forces, and camped at Gilbo'a. When Sha'ul saw the Philistine army, he grew scared, and completely lost his nerve. Sha'ul sought an oracle from Yahweh, but Yahweh didn't answer him—neither through dreams, nor through the Urim, nor through the prophets with him. So Sha'ul said to his officers, "Go find me a woman who is skilled in necromancy, as I'd like to go to her and seek an oracle from Yahweh through her." a

"You know," his officers said, "there is a woman who is skilled in necromancy in Eyn Dor." b

After disguising himself and changing clothes, Sha'ul left, accompanied by two of his men, and visited the woman that night. He said to her, "Please, consult your skin-bottle for me, and raise up for me whomever I tell you to."

"Look here," the woman said back to him, "you do know what Sha'ul did, right? How he eradicated the necromancers and diviners from the land? So why are you putting my life at risk and trying to get me killed?"

Sha'ul swore to her by Yahweh, and said, "As Yahweh lives, you won't receive any punishment because of this matter."

"Who should I raise up for you?" the woman asked.

“Shmu’el—raise him up for me!”

When the woman saw that it was Shmu’el he wanted, she cried out very loudly, “Why have you deceived me?! You’re Sha’ul!”

“Don’t be afraid,” the king said to her. “Tell me, what do you see?”

c “What I see are divine beings rising up from the earth,” the woman replied.

“What shape does it have?” he asked.

“An old man is coming up,” she said. “He’s wrapped himself up in a long robe.”

Sha’ul then knew that it was Shmu’el. He bowed down, face to the ground, and prostrated himself.

—
P60,1 Shmu’el said to Sha’ul, “Why did you disturb me by bringing me up here?”

a “I am in a great deal of trouble,” Sha’ul answered. “The Philishtines are waging war against me, while God has abandoned me and won’t answer me anymore, neither through the prophets nor by dreams. So I conjured you so that you could let me know what I should do.”

—
P60,2 “Why are you asking me this?” Shmu’el said. “The fact is, Yahweh has abandoned you and is now avoiding you! For his own benefit, Yahweh has done exactly what he said he would do in an oracle to me: he has ripped the kingship out of your hands, and given it to your compatriot—to Dawid. Because you didn’t obey Yahweh, and didn’t carry out his vengeance against Amaleq—that’s why Yahweh has carried out his threat against you today! And so that he could deliver up Yisra’el together with you to the Philishtines! Tomorrow you and your sons will be here with me, while Yahweh will deliver Yisra’el’s army right into the Philishtines’ hands!”

Immediately Sha’ul fell to the ground, laid out to his full extent. He was terrified because of Shmu’el’s speech, and in addition he had lost his strength, for he had not eaten any food the entire day or night. Seeing that he was extremely troubled, the woman approached Sha’ul and said to him, “Look, your maidservant obeyed your request, risking her life and doing the things you told me to. Now, I beg you, in return, you also should heed your maidservant. I’m going to put a bit of food in front of you. You must eat so that you can regain your strength, for you need to get back on the road.”



"What I see are divine beings rising up from the earth," the woman replied.
 Figure 6: *The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 10, no. 44c.* Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

But he refused, saying "I'm not going to eat."

However, when his officers pressed him—and the woman too—he relented, got up from the ground and sat down on the bed. Now the woman had a home-fed calf at hand. She quickly took action and slaughtered it; then she took some flour, made it into dough, and



"Dawid and his men, meanwhile, were bringing up the rear with Akish."
 Figure 7: The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 32, no. 162c (reverse image). Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

baked some loaves of mazza. She then brought the food out to Sha'ul and his officers, and they ate. After finishing, they helped him up and went back that night.

**

P61 [1.29] The Philishtines brought together all their forces at Apheq, while the Yisra'elites were camping by the spring located in Yizra'el. The Philistine chieftains were marching into position with hundred-strong and thousand-strong battalions; Dawid and his men, meanwhile, were bringing up the rear with Akish.

The Philishtine generals asked, "What are these Hebrews doing here?"

"Don't you know?" Akish replied. "This is Dawid, who previously served Yisra'el's king Sha'ul, and who has been with me for the past year or two. I have found nothing blameworthy in him from the day
 a he and his men defected until now."

**

P62 But the Philishtine generals became enraged at him, and demanded, "Send that man back! Let him return to the place that you made him overseer of. He's never gone into battle with us, and he's not going to become one of our adversaries now in this battle. You want to know how this guy can put himself in his lord's good graces? We'll tell you—

with the heads of those men of his! After all, isn't this Dawid—the one whom they celebrated with singing and dancing, saying 'Sha'ul has slain thousands, and Dawid tens of thousands'?"

Akish called Dawid over, and said to him, "I swear, as Yahweh lives, that you have been honest and faithful in my judgement, in all your forays with me to and from battle. Indeed, I have found nothing blameworthy in you from the day you arrived until today. The Philistine chieftains, however, don't believe that you are any good. For that reason, you must leave. Go peacefully and don't do anything that the Philistine chieftains would consider wrong." P62,1

Dawid answered Akish, "Really, I ask you, what have I done? From the day I joined you until now, what fault did you ever find in your servant that would prevent me from going and fighting against the enemies of my lord the king?" P62,2 a

"I admit that, in my judgment, you've been as good as one of God's messengers," Akish said. "However, the Philistine princes demanded, 'He mustn't go with us into battle!' So, get an early start in the morning. As for your lord's servants—those who came with you—you all should get an early start in the morning. As soon as you have enough light, go!"

And so, getting an early start, Dawid and his men left in the morning to go back to the Philistines' territory; the Philistine forces, meanwhile, marched north to Yizra'el.

Now, on the third day of Dawid's and his men's journey back to Tsiqlag, the Amaleqites conducted raids against the Southern Desert region, including Tsiqlag. After attacking Tsiqlag, they burned it to the ground and took all the women whom they found there captive, from the most important to the lowliest. (They did not, however, put anyone to death.) Then, driving the captives forward, they continued on their journey. P62,3 [1.30]

When Dawid and his men entered the town, everything was burned to the ground, and their wives and sons and daughters had been taken captive. Dawid and the soldiers with him screamed and cried until they had lost the strength to cry any more. Dawid's two

wives had been captured—Ahino'am of Yizra'el and Abigayil Nabal of Karmel's wife.

Dawid was in dire straits, for the soldiers were threatening to stone him, as each and every one of them was bitterly angry over his sons and daughters. But Dawid took strength in his god Yahweh.

P62,4 Dawid said to the priest Ebyathar Ahimeleksson, "Bring me the ephod, please."

Ebyathar brought the ephod to Dawid.

Dawid then sought an oracle from Yahweh, "If I go after this raiding party, will I catch up to them?"

"Go after them," Yahweh said to him. "You will definitely overtake them, and definitely defeat them!"

So Dawid left, along with the six hundred men who were with him. When they came to the Besor River, some chose to remain behind and stay put. So Dawid continued the chase, accompanied by four hundred men, while the two hundred men who were too worn out to cross the Besor River stayed behind.

a Some men found an Egyptian out in the plains and brought him to Dawid. They gave him some bread, which he ate, and made him drink some water. Then they give him a slice of fig-cake and two bunches of raisins. After he ate those, his strength came back to him, for he had not eaten any food nor drunk any water for three days and three nights.

P62,5 Dawid asked him, "Who do you belong to? Where are you from?"

"I'm an Egyptian servant-boy," he answered. "A slave belonging to an Amalekite man. My lord abandoned me when I fell ill three days ago. At the time we had been raiding the southern desert region—attacking the area that borders Yehudah and the area south of Kaleb. We also set fire to Tsiqlag and destroyed it."

"Can you lead me to this raiding party?" Dawid asked.

"Swear to me by your gods that you won't kill me and that you won't hand me back over to my lord. Then I'll lead you to this raiding party."

And so he led Dawid to them—there they were, scattered in every which direction, eating and drinking and celebrating over the great pile of loot that they had stolen from the Philistines' lands and the

Yehudean countryside. Dawid attacked them at sunset and didn't let up until evening of the next day. Not a single one of them escaped, except for four hundred young men who jumped on camels and got away.

Dawid saved everyone whom the Amaleqites had captured, and also saved both his wives. Nothing belonging to Dawid or his men was missing—nobody important or lowly, no one's sons or daughters, none of the loot, nor anything at all that the Amaleqites had taken. Dawid returned everything. After Dawid rounded up all the sheep and cattle, they drove them in front of the rest of the livestock, proclaiming "These are Dawid's spoils."

When Dawid came to the two hundred men who had been too worn out to follow him, and whom he had made stay behind at the Besor River, they came out to meet him and the soldiers accompanying him. Dawid approached the men, and greeted them warmly.

—

Every bad and despicable person from the men who had gone with Dawid objected, saying, "Because they didn't come with us, we shouldn't give them any of the spoils that we won—except for their wives and sons," in the hope of driving them off so that they might leave.

P62,6
a

—

"No, my brothers," Dawid said, "you will do nothing of the sort. Remember what Yahweh has given us, and how he kept us safe, and how he delivered right into our hands the raiding party that attacked us. So who is going to listen to you regarding this matter? Really, the share of the man who stayed behind with the equipment should be equal to the share of the man who went down into battle—they should divide the spoils together."

P62,7
a

—

And so from that day forward, he established this as a custom and law in Yisra'el, even down to the present day.

P62,8

—

**

After entering Tsiqlag, Dawid sent some of the spoils to the elders of Yehudah as a sign of his friendship, with the message, "Here is a gift for you from the spoils of Yahweh's enemies." He also sent gifts:

P63
a
b

P63,1	To those in Beth-El	—
P63,2	To those in Ramoth Negeb	—
P63,3	To those in Yattir	—
P63,4	To those in Ero'er	—
P63,5	To those in Sipmot	—
P63,6	To those in Eshtemo'a	—
P63,7	To those in Rakal	—
P63,8	To those in the Yerahma'elites' towns	—
P63,9	To those in the Qeynites' towns	—
P63,10	To those in Hormah	—
P63,11	To those in Bor-Ashan	—
P63,12	To those in Athak	—
P63,13	To those in Hebron, and to all the places that Dawid and his men frequented.	

**

P64 [1.31] The Philishtines were relentless in their fighting against Yisra'el. In the face of continuous Philishtine attacks, and as the casualties on Mount Gilbo'a grew, the Yisra'elite forces turned and fled. Some Philishtines then zeroed in on Sha'ul and his sons. The Philishtines killed the three Sha'ulssons—Yehonathan, Abinadab, and Malkishu'a—and then the fighting grew especially heavy around Sha'ul. Not long after, a group of archers, each firing from his bow, found him with their arrows and gravely wounded him.



"A group of archers, each firing from his bow, found him with their arrows and gravely wounded him."

Figure 8: The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 22, no. 125b (detail). Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

Sha'ul said to his equipment-bearer, "Take out your sword and run me through with it! Otherwise these dickheads will come and finish me off and mutilate my body!"

His equipment-bearer, however, was terrified and couldn't bring himself to do it. So Sha'ul took the sword himself and fell on it. When his equipment-bearer saw that Sha'ul was dead, he too fell on his sword, and died alongside him. And so Sha'ul died, as did his three sons and his equipment-bearer—indeed, as did all his men together on that day.

When the Yisra'elites on the other side of the valley and the Yisra'elites living across the Yarden saw that their compatriots had deserted the battlefield and that Sha'ul and his sons had died, they abandoned their towns and fled. The Philishtines in turn went in and occupied them.

**

On the next day, some Philishtines went out to strip the corpses and found Sha'ul and his three sons lying dead on Mount Gilbo'a. They cut off Sha'ul's head and stripped him of his equipment, and then sent messengers all across the Philishtines' territory to take the news to their idols' temples and to the people. They placed Sha'ul's equipment in the temple of Ashtarte, while they hung his corpse from the town-wall at Beth-Shan.

P65

When the inhabitants of Yabesh-Gil'ad heard about this—that is, what the Philishtines had done to Sha'ul—every able man sprang into action. After travelling all night, they took Sha'ul's corpse and

a the corpses of his three sons from the town-wall at Beth-Shan, and went back to Yabesh, where they cremated them. They then took their remains and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Yabesh, after which they fasted for seven days.

**

P66 [2.1] After Sha'ul's death and after Dawid had returned from slaughtering the Amaleqites, Dawid remained in Tsiqlag for two days. Then, on the third day, a man suddenly appeared—he was coming from the camp, from Sha'ul's army, but his clothes were all torn and his head was smeared with dirt. As soon as he met Dawid, he fell to the ground and prostrated himself.

Dawid said to him, "Where are you coming from?"

"I've escaped from the Yisra'elite army's field camp," he replied.

"What happened?" Dawid asked him. "Please tell me!"

He replied that the army had fled from the battle, and that in addition a great many soldiers had fallen and died—and moreover, that Sha'ul and his son Yehonathan were also dead.

Dawid said to the young man reporting this news, "How do you know that Sha'ul and his son Yehonathan are dead?"

b "It just so happened," the young man stated, "that I was on Mount Gilbo'a when I noticed Sha'ul leaning on his spear—and then suddenly the chariotry and the cavalry commanders zeroed in on him. He turned around and saw me at once. When he called for me, I said, 'I'm right here!' He said, 'Who are you?' I responded, 'An Amaleqite.' He said to me, 'Please stand here next to me and kill me quickly, for my death throes have got hold of me, and there's hardly any life left in me.' So I stood next to him and killed him straightaway, for I knew he wouldn't live long after having been wounded like that. I took the crown that was on his head, and the arm-band that was on his arm, and I brought them here to my lord."

Dawid grabbed hold of his clothes and ripped them, as did all the men who were with him. They wept and fasted until evening, mourning for Sha'ul and his son Yehonathan, and for Yahweh's army and the nation of Yisra'el, for they had fallen in battle.

**

Dawid said to the young man who had reported this to him, “Where are you from?” P67

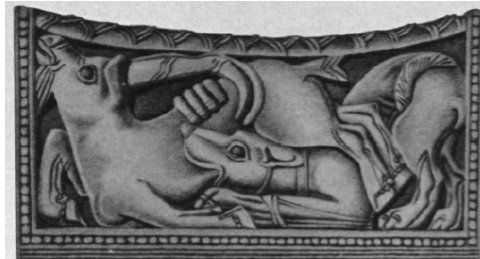
“I’m the son of an Amaleqite immigrant,” he answered.

“How come you weren’t afraid to attack and kill Yahweh’s anointed?” Dawid asked.

Dawid then called to one of his retainers, “Come here—attack him!” And so he struck him down and killed him.

“Your blood is on your head,” Dawid said to him, “for your own words testified to your guilt when you said, ‘I myself put Yahweh’s anointed to death.’”

**



“The gazelle up on your hills, O Yisra’el, lies a corpse. . .”

Figure 9: The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 52. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

Dawid chanted this dirge for Sha’ul and his son Yehonathan, which he said was intended to teach the Yehudeans about warfare (it is recorded in the scroll of Yashar): P68

“The gazelle up on your hills, O Yisra’el, lies a corpse—O, how the mighty have fallen!

Don’t report it in Gath—don’t announce it in the outskirts of Ashqelon
Lest the Philishtine girls rejoice—lest the heathen bitches celebrate! b

O hills in Gilbo’a—on you may there be neither dew nor rain—not even on your uppermost fields

Because it was there the warriors’ shields were befouled—filthy too

Sha’ul’s shield, not cleaned with oil

Befouled with the blood of the slain—with the belly-fat of the warriors

Impossible for Yehonathan's bow to avoid—impossible for Sha'ul's sword to come back without a kill

Sha'ul and Yehonathan—so beloved and delightful in life—but entwined in death

Though fleetier than eagles—though stronger than lions

O women of Yisra'el, weep for Sha'ul—he who dressed you in richly-dyed robes—he who bedecked your clothes with ornaments of gold

O how the mighty have fallen—in the midst of battle—up on your hills, Yehonathan lies a corpse

Anguish for you suffocates me—Yehonathan, my brother

You pleased me so much—your love for me far more wonderful than women's love!

O how the mighty have fallen—O how the implements of war lie abandoned!"

**

P69 [2.2] A short time later, Dawid sought an oracle from Yahweh, inquiring "Should I relocate to the north, into one of the towns in Yehudah?"

"Yes, go north!" Yahweh replied.

"Where should I go?" Dawid asked.

"Hebron."

So Dawid relocated there, along with his two wives, Ahino'am of Yizra'el and Abigayil Nabal of Karmel's wife. At the same time, Dawid also relocated all the men who remained with him and their families, who settled in the towns around Hebron.

The Yehudeans went to see Dawid, and there they anointed him as king over the Yehudean nation. When he was told that "It was some men from Yabesh-Gil'ad who buried Sha'ul"...

—

P69,1 ...he sent messengers to Yabesh-Gil'ad with the following message: "May you be blessed by Yahweh because you have done this kindness for your lord Sha'ul and buried him. Now therefore, may Yahweh deal kindly and faithfully with you—and I too will deal with you just

as generously because of what you did. Now then, have courage and act smartly: although your lord Sha'ul is dead, at the same time the Yehudean nation has anointed me as their king.” a

**

Meanwhile, Sha'ul's commanding general, Abner Nersson, took Sha'-ul's son Ish-Ba'al and brought him to Mahanayim, whereupon he installed him as king over the regions of Gil'ad, Ashur, Yizra'el, Ephrayim, and Binyamin—that is, over Yisra'el in its entirety. P70
a
b

**

Ish-Ba'al Sha'ulsson was forty years old when he began ruling Yisra'el, and he ruled for two years. The Yehudean nation, however, followed after Dawid. Now the amount of time that Dawid was king over the Yehudean nation in Hebron was seven years and six months. P71

—

Abner Nersson and some servants of Ish-Ba'al Sha'ulsson went out on patrol from Mahanayim towards Gib'on. Yo'ab Tseruyahsson and some of Dawid's servants, who were also out on patrol, chanced upon them near the pond at Gib'on, with each group situated at opposite ends of the pond. P71,1

Abner said to Yo'ab, “Let's have the young men get up and entertain us by competing in combat.” a

“Yes, let's have them do that,” Yo'ab replied.

Right away, twelve fighters from Binyamin and from Ish-Ba'al Sha'ulsson's servants went out to fight, as did twelve of Dawid's servants. Each man grabbed the head of his foe opposite him and placed his sword at his foe's side, and then they all fell together into combat. (They call that place the Field of Boulders, which is in Gib'on.) The fighting that day was extremely fierce, with Abner and the Yisra'elites being routed by Dawid's servants. The three Tseruyahssons were there that day—Yo'ab, Abiyshai, and Asah'-el. (Now Asah'-el was fleet-footed, like one of the gazelles that you see in the field.) Asah'-el chased after Abner, veering neither left nor right from his pursuit.

Finally, Abner turned around and said, “Is that you, Asah'-el?”

“Yes it is.”

b “Veer off to your right or your left,” Abner said to him, “and grab hold of one of the young men—take his dagger for yourself!”

Asah-’el, however, wasn’t willing to turn away from pursuing him.

Abner tried once more, saying, “Turn away from me! Why should I be forced to strike you dead?! How could I ever again show my face to your brother Yo’ab?”

c But when he still refused to turn aside, Abner struck him in the belly with the tip of his spear. As the spear exited his backside, he collapsed to the ground and died on the spot. Everyone who had come to the spot where Asah-’el fell and died simply stood there. Meanwhile, Yo’ab and Abiyshai chased after Abner. As the sun was setting, they came to Measurement Hill, which is to the east of Giyah d on the Gib’on Wilderness road.

e The Binyamini fighters joined up to go with Abner, forming themselves into a single company and taking their stand atop one of the hills. Abner called out to Yo’ab, “Will the sword devour till the end of time? Don’t you realize how bitter the aftermath of all this will be? How long will you go without telling your soldiers to stop chasing after their brothers?”

f “As God lives,” Yo’ab replied, “I swear that if you had not spoken, it would have been morning before any of my men would have given up chasing after their brothers.” Then Yo’ab blew on the shophar, and all his men came to a standstill, no longer chasing after Yisra’el and no longer continuing to fight. Abner and his men walked through the desert steppe that entire night, crossing the Yarden and traversing all of the Bithron region before finally arriving at Mahanayim.

g As soon as Yo’ab stopped chasing after Abner, he gathered all his men together and found that out of Dawid’s servants, nineteen men plus Asah-’el were missing. At the same time, Dawid’s servants had struck down many of the Binyaminites and many of Abner’s men, with three hundred sixty men in all dying. Yo’ab and his men carried Asah-’el back home and buried him in his family grave in Beth-Lehem, following which they travelled all night, arriving in Hebron at morning’s first light.

[2.3] As the war between Dawid’s family and Sha’ul’s family dragged on, Dawid grew stronger and stronger while Sha’ul’s family grew weaker and weaker.

It was during this period that Dawid's sons were born in Hebron—his first-born was Amnon (son of Ahino'am of Yizra'el); his second-born was Kil'ab (son of Abigayil Nabal of Karmel's wife); the third was Abshalom (son of Ma'akah Talmay's daughter, daughter of the king of Geshur); the fourth was Adoniyah (son of Haggith); the fifth was Shephatyah (son of Abiytal); and the sixth was Yithre'am (son of Eglah Dawid's wife). These were the sons born to Dawid in Hebron. P71,2

**

While war raged between Dawid's family and Sha'ul's family, Abner was amassing more and more power within Sha'ul's family. Now Sha'ul had a concubine whose name was Ritspah Ayyah's daughter. One day Ish-Ba'al said to Abner, "Why did you sleep with my father's concubine?" P72

Abner became inflamed with anger over Ish-Ba'al's accusation, and he argued, "Am I some son-of-a-bitch who's defected to Yehudah? Here I am, acting kindly with your father Sha'ul's family—with his brothers and his close friends. I haven't handed you over to Dawid. Yet now you're going to punish me for some 'crime' with that woman?! a b

"I swear, may God do the same to Abner—now and always—if I don't do exactly for Dawid what Yahweh swore to him—to remove the kingship from Sha'ul's family, and to establish Dawid's throne over Yisra'el and over Yehudah, from Dan to Be'er-Sheba." P72,1 a

But Ish-Ba'al, because he was so afraid of Abner, wasn't able to argue back.

Abner sent messengers to Dawid, who said on his behalf, "Who's in control of the country?" and "If you make an agreement with me, I'll be right there with you, working hand in hand to turn all Yisra'el over to you." P72,2

"Perfect," Dawid replied. "I'll make an agreement with you. However, there is one thing I'm going to ask of you: You mustn't visit me in person unless and until you bring Mikal Sha'ul's daughter when you come to see me." a



"Dawid put on a feast for Abner and the men who were with him."

Figure 10: The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 32, no. 160c (reverse image). Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

P72,3 Dawid sent messengers to Ish-Ba'al Sha'ulsson, saying "Give me my wife, Mikal, whom I purchased for myself for the bride-price of one hundred Philishtine foreskins."

So Ish-Ba'al sent and took her from her husband, Palti'el Layishson. Her husband walked with her, crying non-stop behind her all the way to Bahurim, when Abner finally said to him, "Go home—be gone!" and made him leave.

a

b

Abner then counseled the elders of Yisra'el, "Previously, you sought out Dawid to ask him to rule over you as king. Now, therefore, make it so! For Yahweh has promised Dawid that it would be through 'my servant Dawid's hand' that he 'would make my people Yisra'el victorious over the Philishtines and over all their enemies'."

c

Abner counseled Binyamin similarly, and then he immediately went to Hebron to advise Dawid regarding everything that Yisra'el and Binyamin wanted in return for their support. When Abner, who was accompanied by twenty men, arrived in Hebron to see Dawid, Dawid put on a feast for Abner and for the men who were with him.

d

Abner said to Dawid, "Let me go right now to gather all Yisra'el together for my lord the king, so that they might make an agreement with you, enabling you to rule however you wish." So Dawid sent Abner away, granting him safe passage.

At about this time, Dawid's servants and Yo'ab returned from raiding, bringing with them large amounts of plunder—Abner, however, was no longer in Hebron with Dawid, as Dawid had just sent him

away with safe passage. As soon as Yo'ab and the raiding party that was with him arrived back in Hebron, he was told, "Abner Neresson went to see the king, and then he sent him away with safe passage."

Yo'ab went to see the king, and said, "What did you do?! Abner just now came to see you—what's the reason for you sending him off and letting him go on his way?! You do realize, don't you, that it was to deceive you that Abner Neresson came here? To learn about your comings and goings and to learn about everything that you're doing!"

As soon as Yo'ab left Dawid's presence, he sent messengers after Abner and they brought him back from the Cistern of Sirah without Dawid knowing about it. When Abner returned to Hebron, Yo'ab pulled him aside at the town gate to speak with him in private. Then, while they were there, he stabbed him in the belly, killing him to e

avenge the murder of his brother Asah-el.

When Dawid heard a little while later what had happened, he thought, "I am wholly innocent—Yahweh will never hold me—or my kingship—culpable for Abner Neresson's murder. Yo'ab's head is dripping with his blood, as is everyone's in his family. I hope Yo'ab's family never lacks for those who are struck by leprosy and disease, who hold fast only to the spindle, who die violent deaths, or who go hungry. For Yo'ab and his brother Abiyshai murdered Abner because he killed their brother Asah-el in the fighting at Gib'on." f g

Dawid said to Yo'ab and to all the soldiers with him, "Rip your clothes, put on sack-cloth, and make a show of mourning, leading the procession for Abner while Dawid the king walks behind the bier." P72,4

And so they buried Abner in Hebron. The king raised his voice in lamentation, weeping openly at Abner's grave, as did everyone there.

Then the king chanted a lament for Abner: P72,5

"Was such a senseless death—how Abner was supposed to die?
Your hands were unbound—your feet unshackled by irons
Yet just like a man dying at the hands of evil men—you fell."

As he chanted, everyone there continued to weep over the body. Then, while it was still daylight, the mourners tried to make Dawid

eat some food. But Dawid swore, “So may God do to me—now and always—if I taste any bread, or anything at all, before sunset.”

When everyone there observed this, they were pleased—for everything that the king had done was pleasing to the people there. All the people—and all Yisra’el—realized on that day that the king had not given the order to murder Abner Neresson.

P72,6 The king said to his servants, “Don’t you know that a great man and general has fallen today in Yisra’el? Today I am only a gentle man who has been anointed king, whereas these men—the Tseruyahssons—are
a far more mean-spirited than me. May Yahweh repay the evil-doer in accord with the evil he has done.”

**

P73 [2.4] a When Ish-Ba’al Sha’ulsson heard that Abner had died in Hebron, his courage slackened and Yisra’el was thrown into confusion. Now,
b there were two men who headed the raiding parties for Sha’ulsson—one named Ba’anah, and the other named Rekab—both of them Binyaminites from the clan of Rimmon of Be’erot. (For at the time Be’erot was considered part of Binyamin; the original inhabitants of Be’erot had fled to Gitayim, where they’ve resided down to the present day.)

P73,1 Yehonathan Sha’ulsson had a son whose feet were crippled. He was five years old when news of Sha’ul’s and Yehonathan’s death arrived from Yizra’el; at the time, his nurse-maid picked him up and fled. It so happened that in her hurry to flee, he fell and crippled himself. His name was Mephiba’al.

 The Rimonssons of Be’erot—Rekab and Ba’anah—went to Ish-Ba’al’s house, arriving at the heat of the day when he was napping on his day-bed. Just as the field-hands entered the house after harvesting wheat, Rekab and his brother Ba’anah stabbed Ish-Ba’al in the abdomen and then made their escape. They had entered the house while
a he was sleeping on his bed in his sleeping chambers. After stabbing and killing him, they cut off his head and then travelled all night on the Desert Steppe Road.

They brought Ish-Ba'al's head to Dawid at Hebron, and said to the king, "Here is the head of Ish-Ba'al Sha'ulsson, your enemy who sought to take your life. Today Yahweh has granted vengeance to our lord the king against Sha'ul and against his descendants."

b

Dawid answered the two brothers, Rekab and Ba'anah Rimonsso of Be'erot, "I swear by the life of Yahweh, who has bailed me out of all my troubles, you should know: the man who gave me the news, 'Look—Sha'ul is dead!'—even though he considered himself just a messenger—I seized hold of him and killed him in Tsiqlag, simply because he gave me the news. And now, evil men have killed a good man in his own home—on his bed! Given that, how could I not seek vengeance on you for his blood, and wipe you off the face of the earth?"

c

d

Dawid gave the command to his retainers, and they killed them. They then cut off their hands and feet, and hung them over the pond in Hebron, while taking Ish-Ba'al's head and burying it in Abner's grave in Hebron.

e

**

All the tribes of Yisra'el travelled to Hebron for an audience with Dawid. They proclaimed, "Here we are—we are your flesh and blood! In the past, when Sha'ul was king over us, you were the one who led Yisra'el out to battle and the one who led us back. Yahweh said to you, 'You are the one who will shepherd my people Yisra'el; you will become supreme leader over Yisra'el'."

P74 [2.5] a

Then all the elders of Yisra'el came to Hebron to meet Dawid. The king, Dawid, made an alliance with them there in Hebron with Yahweh as witness, and then they anointed Dawid as king over Yisra'el.

Dawid was thirty years old when he became king, and he ruled for forty years. In Hebron, he ruled over Yehudah for seven years and six months, and in Yerushalem he ruled for thirty-three years over all Yisra'el and Yehudah.

P74,1

The king and his men travelled to Yerushalem to meet the Yebusites who inhabited the region. But they said to Dawid, "You can't come here, for the blind and the lame have rejected you, saying 'Dawid must not enter here'."

a

b So when Dawid captured the fortress of Tsiyon (that is, Dawidstown), he said, "Anyone who kills a Yebusite or harms the lame or the blind with a spear will make himself odious to Dawid." For this reason, it is said, "Neither the blind nor the lame may enter the palace."

c Dawid resided in the fortress, and named it "Dawidstown." He built it up all around, starting with the outer earthworks and finishing with the interior. Dawid was becoming more and more powerful, for Yahweh God of Armies was with him.

**

P75 Hiram, the king of Tsor, sent a delegation to Dawid, along with cedar trees, skilled carpenters, and skilled stone-masons. They built a palace for Dawid. Dawid then understood that Yahweh had established him as king over Yisra'el and that he had exalted his kingship for the sake of his people Yisra'el.

—

P75,1 Dawid continued to take concubines and wives from Yerushalem after he had moved from Hebron, and even more sons and daughters were born to him. These are the names of the male children born to him in Yerushalem: Shammu'a, Shobab, Nathan, Shelomoh, Yibhar, Eliyshu'a, Nepheg, Yaphi'a, Eliyshama, Elyada, and Eliyphelet.

**

P76 When the Philishtines heard that Dawid had been anointed king over Yisra'el, all their forces marched up to seek battle with him. As soon as Dawid learned of this, he took shelter in his fortress. Around this time, the Philishtines arrived and scattered across the Repha'im Valley
a plundering and pillaging.

Dawid sought an oracle from Yahweh, "If I march out to battle the Philishtines, will you deliver them up to me?"

**

P77 Yahweh answered Dawid, "March out! For I shall certainly deliver them up to you!"

When Dawid came to Ba'al-Paratsim, he slaughtered the Philistines there. He then proclaimed, "Yahweh has overwhelmed my enemies before me, like an onslaught of water!" Therefore, they call the name of that place Ba'al-Paratsim (that is, Onslaught Center). The Philistines left their gods there, and Dawid and his men carried them back as part of their victory spoils.

a
b
c

**

The Philistines marched out once more, and again scattered across the Repha'im Valley plundering and pillaging. P78

When Dawid sought an oracle from Yahweh, he responded, "Do not march out! Go around behind them and engage them next to a grove of balsam trees. As soon as you hear the sound of marching coming through the tree-tops, then you must take action right away. Because that means that Yahweh has marched out in front of you to destroy the Philistines' army."

a

Dawid did exactly as Yahweh had commanded him—and as a result, he slaughtered the Philistines all the way from Geba to Gezer.

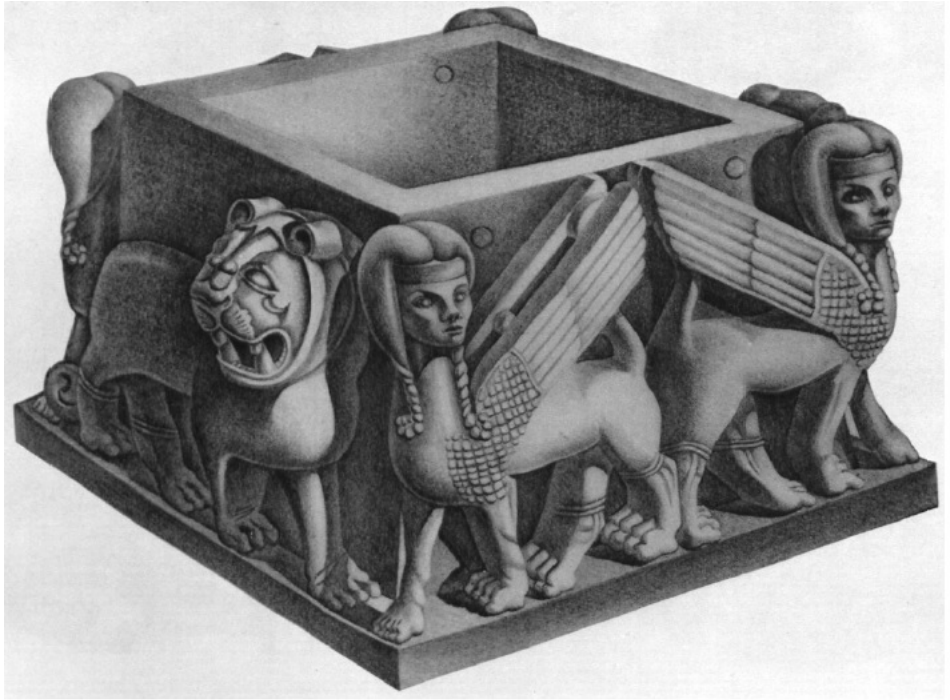
**

Dawid once more gathered together every able young man in Yisra'el—thirty thousand in all. Straight away, Dawid and the soldiers with him set out for Ba'aley-Yehudah in order to bring up from there God's battle-chest, which is called by the name depicted on it: 'Name: Yahweh of Armies, Who Sits Astride the Winged Sphinxes.' They mounted God's battle-chest on a brand new wagon and then carried it off from Abinadab's house (located in Gib'ah), with Abinadab's sons, Uzza and Ahyo, driving the new cart along. P79 [2.6]

a
b
c

As they carried it off from Abinadab's house (located in Gib'ah), Uzza was sitting with God's battle-chest while Ahyo was walking in front of it. At the same time, Dawid and all the Yisra'elites were dancing and playing in front of Yahweh, making music with all sorts of wooden instruments, and with lyres and lutes and tambourines and cymbals and rattles. When they came to Nakon's threshing floor, Uzza reached out to God's battle-chest and grabbed hold of it, for the oxen had stumbled. Yahweh became inflamed with anger toward

d



"Winged Sphinxes..."

Figure 11: The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 2, no. 1c (reverse image). Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

Uzza and struck him down on the spot because of his error. And so he died right there beside God's battle-chest. (Dawid in turn was angry over Yahweh's violent outburst against Uzza. Hence, that place has been called "Uzza's Outburst" down to the present day.)

On that day, Dawid became fearful of Yahweh, worrying to himself, "How will Yahweh's battle-chest ever come to me?" He no longer wanted to have the battle-chest moved to his fortress Dawidstown. Instead, Dawid placed it under a tent at the house of Obed-Edom of Gath. Yahweh's battle-chest remained at Obed-Edom of Gath's house for three months, during which time Yahweh blessed Obed-Edom and his entire family.

When King Dawid was told, “Yahweh has blessed Obed-Edom’s family and everything that he possesses on account of God’s battle-chest,” he brought God’s battle-chest up from Obed-Edom’s house to Dawidstown, celebrating joyfully along the way. And so, each time those carrying Yahweh’s battle-chest had marched six steps, Dawid would sacrifice a bull and a fatted calf. With every ounce of his being, Dawid was dancing in circles before Yahweh—and what’s more, he was doing so while wearing the linen ephod. For the entire time that Dawid and the Yisra’elites were bringing Yahweh’s battle-chest up to Dawidstown, they were continually shouting and blowing on the shophar.

When Yahweh’s battle-chest entered Dawidstown, Mikal Sha’ulsdaughter was looking down at the scene through the window. As she observed Dawid the king prancing about and dancing in circles before Yahweh, she secretly despised him deep in her heart.

They brought Yahweh’s battle-chest into Dawidstown and set it in its place, under the center of the tent that Dawid had set up for it. Dawid then made sacrifices of burnt-offerings before Yahweh, as well as peace-offerings. After Dawid had finished making the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of Yahweh of Armies. He then apportioned out for them—for the whole throng of Yisra’elites, for each man and women—one loaf of hallah bread, one eshpar-cake, and one raisin-cake, after which the crowd dispersed and went home.

As Dawid was returning from blessing his people. . .

—
Mikal Sha’ulsdaughter came out to meet him and said, “How glorious Yisra’el’s king made himself today! Exposing himself today right in front of his officials’ serving-girls—yes, really!—exposing himself like some kind of pervert!”

P79,1

“And in front of Yahweh!” Dawid answered Mikal. “Who chose me over your father, and over all his relatives, appointing me as supreme leader over his people, over Yisra’el—that’s what I was celebrating in front of Yahweh! If I ever embarrass myself more than this, then I couldn’t respect myself. Now, about the serving-girls whom you mentioned—I will have no problem winning their respect!”

a

But as for Mikal Sha’ulsdaughter, she remained childless for the rest of her life.

P80 [2.7] And so the king settled into his palace, Yahweh having given him respite from all his enemies in the surrounding regions. The king said to Nathan the prophet, "Consider this—here I am living in a fine cedar house, whereas God's battle-chest is residing under some tent curtains!"

"Whatever your heart desires," Nathan replied to the king, "go ahead and do! For Yahweh is with you."

On that very night...

P80,1 a An oracle of Yahweh came to Nathan: "Go and speak to my servant Dawid as follows:

P80,2 " 'Thus has Yahweh spoken: 'Are you going to build a house for me to live in? Indeed, from the time I brought the Yisra'elites up from Egypt down to the present day, I haven't lived in a house. Rather, I've been going everywhere in tents and lean-to's. In any of the numerous places that I've gone with the Yisra'elites, was it ever the case that I said to one of the Yisra'elite clans that I had commanded to guide my people Yisra'el, 'Why haven't you built a cedar house for me?'' "

"Now therefore, here is what you must say to my servant Dawid, 'Thus has Yahweh of Armies spoken: 'I took you out of a shepherd's hut at the back of a sheep's pasture and made you supreme leader over my people Yisra'el. I've been with you everywhere that you've gone, and have removed every single one of your enemies from your path. I have made your name as famous as the names of the greatest men on earth. I established a secure place for my people Yisra'el, planting them there and enabling them to live there, without having to fear for their safety and without violent men abusing them anymore, as happened in the earliest days. From the time that I appointed
b governors over my people Yisra'el, I constantly gave you respite from all your enemies, and declared to you that I would establish a dynasty
c for you. When your days come to an end, and you lie in the grave with your ancestors, then I will raise up one of your sons after you—the offspring of your loins—and I will make his kingship secure. He is the one who will build a house for my name, in return for which I will make secure his kingdom's throne for all time. I will be like a father to

him, and he will be like a son to me—so that should he do wrong, I will set him straight with an ordinary paddle, and with regular thwacks. My lovingkindness will never leave him, inasmuch as I took it away from Sha’ul, whom I removed from your path. Your dynasty and your kingdom will be firmly established for all time while you still live—indeed, your throne will last forever!’ ”

In exact accord with this whole speech and with this vision in its entirety, so spoke Nathan to Dawid.

**

So Dawid went and sat under the tent in front of Yahweh, and asked, “Who am I, my lord Yahweh, and who is my family that you decided to bring me this far? Yet even this seems trifling to you, my lord Yahweh, for you also spoke about your servant’s family far in the future. But now I’m talking like a mere human, my lord Yahweh. What more can Dawid still say to you, my lord Yahweh, when you yourself know your servant so well? On account of your promise, and in accord with your desires, you have done this tremendous thing by making it known to your servant.

P81 a

“For that reason, you are without peer my lord Yahweh! Indeed, there is none like you—there is no god but you—as proven by everything our own ears have heard!

b

“And who is comparable to your people, to Yisra’el? A single nation here on earth, whom God felt so inclined to purchase as his own people, establishing great renown for himself and performing on your own the greatest and the most wondrous deeds—for your land, in sight of your own people, whom you purchased for yourself from Egypt—from its peoples and its gods! For your own benefit, you established your people Yisra’el, making them your people for all time, and making yourself, O Yahweh, their god.

c

—
“So now, O Yahweh my god, with respect to the words that you spoke about your servant and his family—make them come true for all time, and do just as you promised! So that your name may forever be exalted—‘Yahweh of Armies, god of Yisra’el!’—and so that the family of your servant Dawid may be secure before you! O Yahweh of Armies, god of Yisra’el, you truly have revealed your promise to your

P81,1

d

servant, saying ‘I will establish a dynasty for you.’ For that reason,
b your servant felt an urge in his heart to sing out this prayer to you. So:
“O my lord, Yahweh, you are the supreme god—your words are truth itself, and now you have promised your servant such a beautiful thing! So I pray—be willing to bless your servant’s family so that they might always stand before you! Indeed, O my lord Yahweh, you yourself have promised as much: that from your blessing, your servant’s family will be blessed for all time!”

**

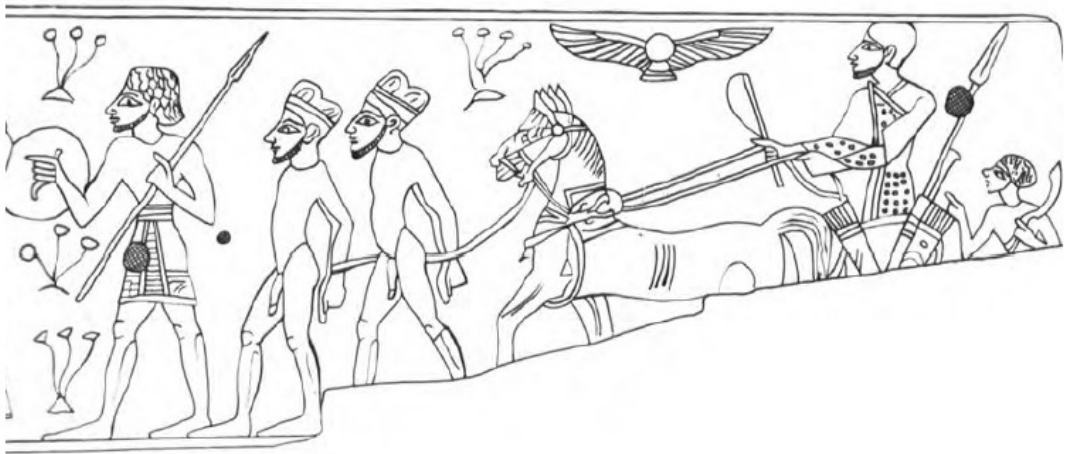
P82 [2.8] Some time after these events, Dawid attacked and defeated the Philistines, subjugating them and capturing their capital city Metheg. Then
a Dawid attacked and defeated Mo’ab. He divided them up into large groups and made them lie on the ground. He apportioned off two groups for execution, and allowed one entire group to live. And so Mo’ab became tribute-bearing vassals to Dawid.

b Next Dawid defeated Hadadezer Rehobsson, the king of Tsobah, during his campaign against the region around the River Perath. Dawid captured from him seventeen hundred cavalry, and twenty thousand infantry. He hamstrung all the horses of the chariotry, except for one hundred that he spared.

When Aram Dammeseq came to Hadadezer’s aid, Dawid slaughtered twenty-two thousand men from Aram’s forces. Dawid established garrisons in Aram Dammeseq, and so Aram became tribute-bearing vassals to Dawid.

Yahweh gave victory to Dawid in every region where he campaigned. Dawid took the golden shields that belonged to Hadadezer’s officers and brought them back to Yerushalem. From Hadadezer’s cities Betah and Berothay, King Dawid took a great deal of copper.

P82,1 When To’iy the king of Hamath heard that Dawid had defeated Hadadezer’s army, he sent his son Yoram to King Dawid to pay his respects to
a him, and to congratulate him on account of his fighting Hadadezer and
b defeating him (for Hadadezer was one of To’iy’s fiercest adversaries). As tribute, he brought along vessels and other equipment made of gold, silver, and bronze.



"Dawid captured from him seventeen hundred cavalry, and twenty thousand infantry."

Figure 12: *The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 4, no. 2b (detail)*. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

These items too Dawid consecrated to Yahweh, along with the silver and gold that he had consecrated from all the peoples whom he had subjugated—from Aram, from Mo'ab, from the Ammonites, from the Philishtines, and from Amaleq—as well as from the spoils of Hadadezer Rehobsson, King of Tsobah.

Dawid won great reknown for himself when he returned from defeating Aram in the Salt Valley, where he killed eighteen thousand men. He established garrisons in Edom—in fact, in every region of Edom he established garrisons, with the result that all of Edom became his vassals. And so Yahweh gave victory to Dawid in every place where he campaigned.

Dawid ruled over all Yisra'el, and he continually acted with fairness and justice toward his people. Yo'ab Tseruyahsson was head of the army, Yehoshapat Ahiludsson was chief secretary, Tsadoq Ahitubsson and Ahimelek Ebyatharsson were the head priests, Sarayah was the head scribe, and Benayahu Yehoyadasson oversaw the king's personal guard. As for Dawid's sons, they served as priests.

Dawid thought to himself, "I wonder if there is anyone from Sha'ul's

P82,2 [2.9]

family who is still alive, for I should deal kindly with him on account of Yehonathan.” In fact, there was a servant belonging to Sha’ul’s family by the name of Tsiba. They summoned him to an audience with Dawid.

The king asked him, “Are you Tsiba?”

“Yes, your servant is.”

a “Is there no one from Sha’ul’s family who is still alive, and whom I should be especially kind to?” the king asked.

“One of Yehonathan’s sons is still alive, who happens to be lame-footed,” Tsiba replied.

“Where is he now?”

“Right now he’s living in the village of Lo Dabar, in Makir Ami’elsson’s house,” Tsiba answered.

Thereupon King Dawid sent for him and took him from Makir Ami’elsson’s house in Lo Dabar. When Mephiba’al Yehonathansson Sha’ulsson came to see Dawid, he bowed down face to the ground and prostrated himself.

b Dawid said, “Mephiba’al!”

“Here I am, your servant.”

“Don’t be afraid,” Dawid said to him. “For I really want to deal kindly with you on account of your father Yehonathan—I’m going to give back to you all the land owned by your grandfather Sha’ul, and you will be welcome to take your meals at my table for as long as you live.”

c Bowing down again, he said, “Of what importance is your servant that you have looked with such regard upon a worthless creature like me?”

d Dawid called over Sha’ul’s steward Tsiba, and said to him, “Everything that Sha’ul owned, and that his entire family owned, I hereby give over to your lord’s son. You will work the land for him—you and your sons and your slaves—and bring its produce to him, so that your lord’s son might have food to eat. Your lord’s son Mephiba’al will be welcome to take his meals at my table for as long as he lives.”

Now, as Tsiba had fifteen sons and twenty slaves, he said to the king, “Exactly as my lord the king commands his servant, so shall your servant do. Moreover, Mephiba’al shall be welcome to eat at my table, just as if he were one of the king’s own sons.”



"You will work the land for him—you and your sons and your slaves—and bring its produce to him..."

Figure 13: *The Megiddo Ivories*, Plate 32, no. 162c. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

Even though Mephiba'al had a young son named Mika, and even though all those living in Tsiba's house were Mephiba'al's slaves, he chose to reside in Yerushalem, for he preferred to take all his meals at the king's table, despite the fact that he was lame in both feet.

**

Shortly afterwards, the king of the Ammonites died, and his son Hanun assumed the throne. Dawid thought, "I ought to deal favorably with Hanun Nahashsson, just as his father Nahash did with me." So Dawid had his officials take a gift to console him on account of his father.

P83 [2.10]

a

b

Once Dawid's officials had entered the Ammonites' territory, the Ammonite chieftains said to their lord Hanun, "Do you think Dawid is actually intending to honor your father by sending this delegation to offer his condolences to you? Didn't he really send this delegation here so that they could acquaint themselves with the city and explore it thoroughly—and then overthrow it?"

So Hanun arrested Dawid's officials; after shaving off one side of their beards and cutting their coats in half down to their buttocks, he sent them back home. When this news was reported to Dawid, he sent a company to meet them, because the men had been exceptionally humiliated. The king said, "Stay in Yeriho until your beards grow

back, and then you can return home.”

c When the Ammonites saw that they had offended Dawid, they sent messengers abroad and hired twenty thousand foot-soldiers from Aram Beth-Rehob and Aram Tsoba, one thousand mercenaries from the king of Ma’akah, and twelve thousand mercenaries from Ish-Tob. Dawid heard this, and in response he sent out Yo’ab and the full strength of his army.

The Ammonites marched out and set their battle-lines in front of the city gate, whereas Aram Tsoba and Rehob, Ish-Tob, and Ma’akah separately organized their battle-lines in the surrounding fields. When Yo’ab saw that he faced battle-lines in front and behind, he selected some of the Yisra’elite warriors and deployed them to oppose Aram, while putting the rest of the army under the command of his brother Abshai and deploying them to face the Ammonites. He said to his brother, “If Aram proves stronger than me, you come to my aid; likewise, if the Ammonites prove stronger than you, then I will come to save you. Be tough, and let’s both be strong—for the sake of our men, and for the sake of our god’s towns. And let Yahweh do as he sees fit!”

When Yo’ab and the soldiers who were with him advanced to do battle against Aram, the Arameans turned and ran away. And when the Ammonites saw that Aram had fled, they in turn fled from Abiyshai’s forces and retreated back into the city. Yo’ab then withdrew from attacking the Ammonites, and went back to Yerushalem.

Once the Arameans learned that their men had been roundly beaten by Yisra’el, they convened a state meeting. Hadadezer sent a delegation and summoned the Arameans who live west of the Perath River. Their army came to their aid, led by Shobak, the commander of Hadadezer’s army.

P83,1 Upon receiving this news, Dawid mobilized all the Yisra’elite forces, crossed over the Yarden River, and marched into Helam. Aram had already prepared to attack Dawid, and at once engaged him in battle. But Aram turned and fled from the Yisra’elites. Dawid’s forces struck down seven hundred charioteers and forty thousand cavalry from Aram, and also grievously wounded Shobak, the commander of Aram’s army, who died on the battlefield.

When all the kings—the vassals of Hadadezer—saw that they had been soundly defeated by Yisra’el, they sued for peace with Yisra’el and agreed to serve as their vassals. And so Aram was afraid to provide aid to the Ammonites any longer.

**

Sometime around mid-summer—the season when messengers are going to and fro—Dawid sent Yo’ab (who was accompanied by a number of Dawid’s officials) and the Yisra’elite forces out to do battle. While Dawid stayed behind in Yerushalem, they ravaged the Ammonite countryside and put Rabbah under siege.

P84 [2.11]

Now it so happened one evening that Dawid had gotten up from his bed and was pacing back and forth on the roof of the palace when he noticed a woman bathing herself opposite the roof—and, moreover, this woman was exceptionally beautiful. Dawid sent a servant to inquire about her; upon his return, the servant said “Please know—that woman is Bath-Sheba Eli’amsdaughter, the wife of Uriyah the Hittite.”

P84,1

So Dawid sent messengers and they brought her back to the king. She entered his room, he had intercourse with her (she at the time had just purified herself from her menstrual uncleanness), and then she returned home. Later, when the woman saw she had conceived, she sent a message informing Dawid, “I am pregnant.”

a

Dawid sent a message to Yo’ab, “Send me Uriyah the Hittite.” And so Yo’ab sent Uriyah to Dawid. When Uriyah came to see him, Dawid asked how Yo’ab was doing, how the army was doing, and how the battle was going. Dawid then told Uriyah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet.”

b

Uriyah left the king’s house, with a gift from the king following right behind. But Uriyah slept in front of the palace with all his lord’s servants, and did not go down to his house.

When Dawid was told that Uriyah didn’t go down to his house, he said to Uriyah, “Haven’t you just arrived after a long journey? So why haven’t you gone down to your house?”

“The battle-chest and the forces of Yisra’el and Yehudah are living in lean-to’s,” Uriyah replied, “while my lord Yo’ab and my lord’s

officers are camping out in the open. And I'm supposed to go back to my house to eat and drink and have intercourse with my wife? I swear on your very life and soul that I could never do such a thing!"

Dawid said to Uriyah, "Stay here again today, and then tomorrow I'll send you back." So Uriyah stayed in Yerushalem on that day and the following one. Dawid invited him to the king's table; they ate and drank together, and Dawid succeeded in getting him drunk. However, when he left that evening, he slept on his bed-roll with his lord's servants, and didn't go down to his house.

The next morning, Dawid wrote a letter to Yo'ab and had Uriyah take it back. In the letter he wrote: "Station Uriyah on the front line where the battle is fiercest, and then pull back behind him—let him be struck down and die."

P84,2 And so, when Yo'ab was keeping watch over the city, he put Uriyah in the place where he knew the best warriors were. Shortly thereafter, the defenders of the city came out and began fighting with Yo'ab's forces. Among those from the army who fell in battle were several of Dawid's officers—including Uriyah the Hittite, who also died there.

Afterwards, Yo'ab sent a message to inform Dawid about everything that happened in the battle. He ordered the messenger, "When you've finished telling the king everything that happened in the battle, if the king grows angry and says to you, 'Why did you approach the city to fight? Didn't you realize the extent to which they shoot arrows from atop the city wall? Who killed Abimelek Yerubbeshethsson? Didn't a woman drop a mill-stone on him from atop the town wall when he died in the town of Tebets? Why did you approach the city wall?!', if he says that, then you should say to him, 'Your servant Uriyah the Hittite is also among the dead.'"

And with that, the messenger departed. Upon arriving, he informed Dawid of everything that Yo'ab had sent him to report. Specifically, the messenger said to Dawid, "Their forces were much stronger than us. They came out to engage with us in the fields, and at the same time we were fighting them all the way up to the front of the city gate. Their archers shot arrows at your officers from atop the city wall; several of the king's officers died—and your servant Uriyah the Hittite is also among the dead."

Dawid replied, “Here is what you must say to Yo’ab: ‘Don’t be upset about what’s happened—indeed, ‘the sword consumes where it will.’ Intensify your fighting against the city and take it over.’ And so encourage him like that.” P84,3
a

When Uriyah’s wife learned that her husband had died, she went into mourning for him. After the period of mourning was over, Dawid sent for her and brought her into his household. And so she became one of his wives and bore him a son. Yahweh, however, was extremely displeased over what Dawid had done.

**

Yahweh sent Nathan to Dawid. Upon arriving to see him, he said, P85 [2.12]
“There were two men who lived in the same city—one was rich, and the other was poor. The rich man owned a large number of cattle and sheep. The poor man, however, had nothing at all except a single small lamb that he had purchased. He cared for it, and it grew up in his house together with his sons. It would eat some of his bread, and drink from his cup, and snuggle with him in bed—it was just like a daughter to him. Now one day a traveler arrived at the rich man’s house. However, he couldn’t bear taking one of his sheep or cattle to prepare for the traveler who had come to see him, so instead he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for the traveler who had come to see him.”

Dawid became greatly inflamed with anger at that man, and he said to Nathan, “I swear to Yahweh that the man who does that sort of thing deserves to die! He ought to repay that lamb eight-fold because of what he did and because he felt nothing for that man!”

—

“That man is you!” Nathan cried. P85,1

—

“Here is the oracle from Yahweh, the god of Yisra’el: ‘Even though I anointed you king over Yisra’el, even though I saved you from Sha’ul’s clutches—going so far as giving you your lord’s house, and putting his own wives into your bed—even though I bestowed to you the nations of Yisra’el and Yehudah, was all that not enough, so that I am supposed to add even more to all that? Why did you show such contempt for Yahweh’s oracle by doing such an evil thing right before P85,2
a

my eyes—sending Uriyah the Hittite to a violent death, and taking his wife as your own? You killed him with the Ammonites' sword—
b therefore, the sword will never turn away from your family. And because you showed contempt for me by taking Uriyah the Hittite's wife to be your own wife—

P85,3 ... "here is Yahweh's oracle—'therefore I'm going to bring disaster upon you from your very own family. I will take away your wives
a right before your eyes, and give them to your compatriot. And then he will have sex with your wives in public, in broad daylight. Whereas you acted in secret, I will carry out these actions openly, in view of all Yisra'el.' "

P85,4 Dawid said to Nathan, "I have sinned against Yahweh."

P85,5 "And Yahweh in turn has taken away your sin; you will not die,"
a Nathan replied. "However, because you so egregiously reviled Yahweh's enemies in this matter, the son just born to you is, as a result, doomed to die."

After Nathan returned to his home, Yahweh struck the child whom Uriyah's wife had borne to Dawid, and he fell deathly ill.

b Dawid sought an oracle from God on behalf of the boy. He took no food and fasted, and then went to the tent-shrine and spent the night there, sleeping on the ground. The men of his family stood over him, trying to lift him up from the ground, but he refused to get up; nor did he eat any food with them.

After seven days, the child died. Dawid's servants were afraid to tell him that the child had died, for they said to one another, "Look here—when the child was alive, we would speak to him and he wouldn't listen to us. How can we talk to him now that the child is dead? He would do something terrible!"

When Dawid saw his servants whispering among themselves, he understood that the child had died. He said to his servants, "Is the child dead?"

"Yes, he's dead," they replied.

c Dawid rose from the ground, and then bathed and anointed himself. After changing his clothes, he went to Yahweh's temple and

prostrated himself in worship. Upon entering his house, he asked for some food. They set it before him, and he ate.

His servants said to him, “We don’t understand what you are doing. While the child was alive, you fasted and mourned. But as soon as the child died, you got up and took some food.”

“As long as the child was alive,” he replied, “I fasted and mourned because I thought, ‘Who knows? Perhaps Yahweh will have compassion on me and let the child live.’ But now that he’s dead, what’s the point of me continuing to fast? Could I somehow bring him back? I will eventually go to him, but he cannot come back to me.”

Dawid consoled his wife Bath-Sheba, going to her and having intercourse with her. She bore a son, and named him Shelomoh.

But because Yahweh loved him, he sent an oracle through the prophet Nathan, who called him Yedidyah (that is, ‘Yahweh’s beloved’), “on account of Yahweh”.

d

**

Yo’ab meanwhile had attacked Rabbah in the Ammonites’ territory and captured the royal city. Yo’ab sent messengers to Dawid, saying “I have attacked Rabbah, and I have now taken control of its water supply. So don’t delay—muster the rest of the army, establish your camp opposite the city and capture it! Otherwise, I myself will capture the city and get credit for the victory.”

P86 a

So Dawid mustered the army, marched to Rabbah, and then attacked the city and captured it. He removed the king’s crown from his head—it weighed a talent in gold and in precious stones—and then, with the crown on his head, he brought out from the city a tremendous amount of plunder. At the same time, Dawid brought out all those who remained in the city and, after furnishing them with saws, iron hatchets and iron axes, he put them into forced labor making bricks. Then, after taking similar actions against all the Ammonites’ towns, Dawid and his army returned to Yerushalem.

b

**

a Some time later... Dawid's son Abshalom had a beautiful sister
 b named Tamar, and it so happened that another of Dawid's sons, Am-
 non, was in love with her. Amnon had made himself so love-sick
 that he was in anguish over his half-sister Tamar, for she was a mar-
 riageable young woman, and Amnon felt completely overwhelmed
 whenever he tried to do anything at all for her.

c Amnon had a friend by the name of Yonadab Shim'ahsson. Yon-
 adab, who was Dawid's nephew, was a very wise man. He said to
 Amnon, "Why are you like this—a son of the king looking miserable
 morning after morning? Won't you tell me what's wrong?"

Amnon replied, "It's Tamar, my brother Abshalom's sister—I'm in
 love with her."

"Lie down on your bed and pretend to be sick," Yonadab said to
 him. "Then, when your father comes in to see you, you should say to
 him, 'Please have my sister Tamar come here and give me some food
 to eat. She can prepare the meal here in my room—that way I can see
 what she's doing and eat what she gives me.'"

So Amnon lay down and pretended to be sick. When the king
 came in to see him, Amnon said to him, "Please have my sister Tamar
 come here and make two bread-cakes here in my room, so that I have
 something to eat."

Dawid sent a message to Tamar back at the palace, saying, "Please
 come to your brother Amnon's house and make him some food."
 When Tamar arrived at her half-brother Amnon's house, he was still
 lying down. She took the dough, kneaded it, formed it into cakes
 right there in his room, and then fried them up. Taking the pan, she
 dumped the cakes out onto his plate; however, he refused to eat.

e Amnon said, "Send all the male servants out."

After all the male servants had left, Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring
 the food to me in my bedroom, and then I'll eat what you give me."

f Taking the cakes that she had prepared, Tamar went to see her
 brother Amnon in his bedroom. As she approached him with the food,
 he grabbed her and said, "Come here sister, have sex with me!"

g "No brother!" she cried. "Don't force me and humiliate me! That's
 not the right way to do this! Not in Yisra'el! Don't do such a stupid
 h thing! Think about it: how could I get rid of my shame? And then you
 would become one of the biggest fools in all Yisra'el! So please, I beg
 you, speak to the king—he won't deny me to you!"

But he wasn't willing to listen to what she was saying. He overpowered her, and then humiliated her by forcing her to have sex with him. When Amnon finished, he suddenly felt an intense and very great hatred toward her. Indeed, the hatred that he felt for her at that moment was far greater than the love that he had felt for her previously.

"Get up! Get out!" Amnon yelled at her.

"Don't!" Tamar cried. "Because sending me away like this is a far worse wrong than that other thing that you just did to me!"

But Amnon wouldn't listen to her. He called his servant in and said, "Please—get this bitch out of my sight! Send her outside and bar the door behind her!"

At the time, she was wearing a long-sleeved under-tunic as her outer garment, for that was the fashion in which the marriageable

daughters of the king dressed themselves back then. The servant took her outside, and then barred the door behind her.

Tamar smeared dirt on her head, and ripped apart the under-tunic that she had on. Then, placing one hand on her head, she walked off, screaming every step of the way.

Her brother Abshalom said to her, "Was it that little shit Amnon your brother who did this to you? Now please, sister, calm down.



"When Tamar arrived at her half-brother Amnon's house..."
Figure 14: The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 38, no. 173c. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

i

j k

l

m

n

He's your brother. Don't be so upset over this."

So Tamar stayed at her brother Abshalom's house, but she was completely distraught.

When King Dawid heard everything that had happened, he became violently angry. By contrast, Abshalom didn't say anything to Amnon, either bad or good, for he hated Amnon on account of the way he had humiliated his sister Tamar.

**

P88 Two days later—when Abshalom's sheep-shearers were at work in Ba'al-Hatsor (which is located right next to Ephrayim)—Abshalom
a summoned all the king's children to the palace. He went in to see the king, and said, "Please know—your servant's sheep-shearers are at work now. Please, I beg you, your servant would like for the king and his servants to come with him."

The king answered Abshalom, "No, son. Not all of us should go. I don't want us to be a burden to you."

When Abshalom insisted, the king was still unwilling to go, and instead simply wished him a good journey.

b "Not everyone then," Abshalom conceded. "But at least let my brother Amnon come with us."

"Why should he go with you?" the king asked.

c But Abshalom was so insistent that the king finally sent Amnon with him, along with all his other children.

—

P88,1 Along the way, Abshalom ordered his retainers, "Please take note—when Amnon's mood is showing the effects of the wine, I'm going to say to you, 'Attack Amnon and kill him.' Don't be afraid—isn't it the
a case that I myself will have given you the order? Be firm, and show some courage!"

b And so a little later, when Abshalom gave the order, his retainers did exactly that to Amnon. The rest of the king's children made a quick escape, jumping on their mules and fleeing. They were still on the road when the report reached the king: "Abshalom has killed all the king's children—not a single one has survived."

**

Immediately upon hearing the news, the king tore his clothes and lay on the ground; all his servants meanwhile—their clothes also torn—stood nearby looking on. —

P89
a

Responding to the situation, Dawid's nephew Yonadab Shim'ahsson spoke up: "Don't let anyone, my lord, accuse Abshalom's retainers of killing the king's children, for only Amnon is dead. Indeed, Abshalom put a bounty on his head the day he raped his sister Tamar. So now, my lord the king shouldn't worry one bit about this report that all the king's children are dead. Rather, only Amnon is dead."

P89,1
a
b

**

Abshalom fled. Meanwhile, one of Dawid's servants who was acting as lookout was scanning the horizon when suddenly he noticed something in the distance: a large group coming from the opposite direction, on the side of the mountain.

P90
a

Yonadab said to the king, "Look—the king's children have arrived! Exactly as your servant said!"

Just as he finished saying these words, the king's children arrived and immediately started wailing. At the same time, the king and all of his servants also began crying very loudly, overcome with great emotion.

Abshalom fled and sought refuge with Talmay Amihudsson, the king of Geshur; Dawid, meanwhile, was mourning continually over his son.

b
c

Abshalom fled and sought refuge in Geshur, where he remained for three years. King Dawid, though, didn't have the energy to go after Abshalom, for he was in mourning for Amnon, because he was dead.

d

—

Knowing that the king was upset about Abshalom, Yo'ab Tseruyahsson sent messengers to Theqo'ah to bring him a wise woman who lived there.

P90,1 [2.14]

"Please, pretend to be in mourning," he said to her, "and, I beg you, please put on mourning garments. Don't anoint yourself with oil—you need to look like a woman who's been in mourning for quite

a some time over a dead relative. You must go to the king and say to him the following.” Then Yo’ab told her exactly what she should say.

b And so the Theqo’ahite woman went to speak to the king. She bowed down, face to the ground, prostrated herself before him, and said, “May the king save me from my troubles!”

P90,2 “What’s worrying you?” the king asked.

“Actually,” she answered, “I am just a humble widow whose husband has died. Your maid-servant has two sons. They were fighting with each other in the field, and there was no one there to separate them. One of them struck the other, and killed him. And now, my entire family has risen up against your maid-servant and demanded, ‘Hand over the boy who killed his brother, so that we can put him to death as recompense for the life of his brother whom he killed, even though it means putting an end to your lineage!’ And so they want to extinguish my last piece of remaining coal, so as to prevent my husband from having his name or any descendants perpetuated here on earth.”

**

P91 “Go back home while I deliberate over your case,” the king replied to the woman.

a “Any guilt in this case, my lord and king, should be borne by me and by my father’s family,” the Theqo’ahite woman said. “The king himself and his throne can’t be held responsible.”

P91,1 “Who specifically is making these demands of you?” the king asked. “Bring him here, and I’ll make sure he no longer bothers you!”

“I beg you, please, may the king keep your god Yahweh in mind and not give the blood avenger the latitude to kill, so that they don’t murder my son.”

“I swear, as Yahweh lives, not a single hair from your son’s head shall fall to the ground!”

“Please, I beg you,” the woman continued, “your maid-servant would like to say one more thing to my lord the king.”

“You may speak.”

“So why has the king decided this way with respect to God’s people,” the woman said, “but at the same time in this other matter the king pronounces the man guilty, so as not to allow the one whom he banished to return? Indeed, all of us must die one day—just like ‘water that is poured out to the ground and can’t be put back’. God doesn’t take a life without reason; rather, he gives careful consideration so as not to banish the outcast unjustly.

P91,2 a

b

c

“So now you know the reason I came here to speak about this matter to my lord the king. Because my relatives frightened me so much, your maid-servant thought, ‘I really ought to go speak to the king. Perhaps the king will do as his maid-servant requests. For the king might listen to me and save his maid-servant from the hands of the men trying to wipe out me and my son from God’s land.’ Your maid-servant further thought, ‘I hope my lord the king’s ruling gives me relief, for my lord the king is just like one of God’s messengers—judging who is in the right and who is in the wrong.’ May Yahweh your god be with you!”

d

**

In response, the king said to the woman, “Please, don’t withhold any details from me in the matter I’m going to ask you about.”

P92

“Please, my lord and king, speak.”

“Did Yo’ab put you up to all of this?”

“On your life, my lord and king,” the woman answered, “I swear that everything my lord the king says is exactly correct. Indeed, it was your servant Yo’ab. He was the one who ordered me to do this. He was the one who told your maid-servant exactly what to say. It was in order to turn this unfortunate situation around that your servant Yo’ab did this. But my lord is very wise—his wisdom being like that of God’s messengers, he knows everything that happens here on earth.”

a

b

—
The king said to Yo’ab, “Okay, here you are. I will do what you want. Go—bring back my boy Abshalom.”

P92,1

Yo’ab threw himself down, and with his face to the ground, prostrated himself and blessed the king: “Now your servant knows that I have found favor in your sight, my lord and king, because the king has done what your servant asked.”

Yo'ab then went straight away to Geshur, and brought Abshalom back to Yerushalem.

—
P92,2 But the king said, "Tell him to turn around and go back home; he won't get an audience with me." And so Abshalom turned around and went home, without meeting the king in person.

—
P92,3 Now, there was no man in all Yisra'el who was more celebrated for being handsome than Abshalom—from head to toe, he didn't have a single blemish. When he would shave his head (for he would only
a shave at the end of the year, when his hair had become so thick that he needed to shave it), the hair he shaved off would weigh two hundred
b sheqels on a royal standard scale. Abshalom fathered three sons and one daughter. The daughter, whose name was Tamar, was a very beautiful woman.

**

P93 After Abshalom had been in Yerushalem for two days without getting an audience with the king, he sent for Yo'ab so that he might take a message to the king for him. Yo'ab, however, wasn't willing to come see him. Abshalom sent a second message to the same effect, but Yo'ab still wouldn't come.

As a result, he said to his servants, "Look here—Yo'ab has some property right next to mine where he's growing barley. Go and set fire to it!" And so Abshalom's servants set Yo'ab's field on fire.

**

P94 Yo'ab immediately went to see Abshalom at his house and demanded, "Why did your servants set fire to my property?!"

"Look here," Abshalom replied, "I sent you a message demanding you come here so that I could send you on to the king to ask him what was the point of me coming back from Geshur. It would be better for me if I were still there. Now then, I would like an audience with the king. If there's anything I'm guilty of, then let him put me to death."

And so Yo'ab did go to see the king. After Yo'ab related all this to him, the king summoned Abshalom. When he arrived to see the

king, he prostrated himself before the king, face to the ground. And the king in turn welcomed him with a kiss.

A short time after these events, Abshalom equipped himself with a chariot and horses, and with a band of fifty men who would run before him. Abshalom would start early each day and station himself beside the road leading to the town gate.

P94,1 [2.15]

a

Whenever someone who had a legal dispute passed by on his way to obtain a decision from the king, Abshalom would call him over and ask him which town he was from. If he replied, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Yisra'el," then Abshalom would say to him, "Look here, your case may be right and well-justified, but you won't get a fair hearing from the king."

Abshalom would add, "I wish someone would appoint me judge for the country. Then, any man who had a legal dispute or a matter needing adjudication could come to me and I would vindicate him."

And whenever anyone would approach Abshalom and start to prostrate himself before him, Abshalom would reach out, grab hold of him, and greet him with a kiss instead. Abshalom acted in this manner with every Yisra'elite who was coming to obtain a ruling from the king. And so Abshalom succeeded in stealing the hearts of the Yisra'elites.

**

On his fortieth birthday, Abshalom said to the king, "Please, grant me permission to go to Hebron and fulfill my vow that I vowed to Yahweh. For your servant vowed when I was staying in Geshur in Aram that 'If Yahweh really does bring me back to Yerushalem, then I will perform service to him'."

P95 a

"Go then, and have a safe journey," the king replied. And so Abshalom left straightaway and went to Hebron.

**

Abshalom sent secret operatives out to all the tribes of Yisra'el with the following message, "When you hear the sound of the shophar, you must proclaim, 'Abshalom rules as king in Hebron!'"

P96

Now, two hundred men had accompanied Abshalom from Yerushalem; these men had been invited by him and had innocently made the journey, not knowing anything of what Abshalom was plotting. Abshalom then sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, one of Dawid's chief advisors, from his town Giloh while he was making his annual sacrifices. With that, the conspiracy was firmly set, and the forces with Abshalom were growing more numerous by the day.

When the herald came to Dawid and gave the report—"The Yisra'elites' support is now with Abshalom!"—Dawid cried to all the servants with him in Yerushalem, "Quick! We have to flee, for we don't have any way to escape from Abshalom. Hurry! Get going! For if he hurries, he will catch up to us—and that would mean disaster for us, as his attack on the town will be murderous!"

"Whatever our lord the king chooses to do," the king's servants replied, "we your servants will be right there with you!"

And so the king and his entire family fled town on foot; he left behind only ten concubines from his harem to guard the palace. Having left town on foot, the king and his supporters stopped at Beth-hamMerhoq. Meanwhile, his servants continued on, passing by to the king's side. At the same time, the king's personal guard and the entire Gittite division (six hundred men who had come on foot from Gath) were also passing by in front of the king.

P96,1 The king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why are you also travelling with us? Go back home and stay with the king, for not only are you a foreigner, but you're also an exile from your home. You just arrived yesterday, and now here I am today making you wander around with us—for I myself am going who knows where. Go back, and deal kindly and faithfully with your kinsmen who are here with you now."

"I swear," Ittai responded, "as Yahweh lives and as my lord the king lives, that wherever my lord the king is—whether that means life or death—that's where your servant will be also!"

"Go then," Dawid said to Ittai, "cross on over."

And so Ittai the Gittite crossed over, along with all the men and children who were with him. While the whole land continued wailing and crying, the army also crossed over. Then, as the army passed on down the main road leading out to the wilderness, the king himself crossed over the Wadi Qidron. And then all of a sudden, Tsadoq

appeared, accompanied by the Lewites carrying the battle-chest of the Confederation with God. They set God's battle-chest down and then Ebyathar climbed atop it until all the people coming out of town had finished crossing the wadi.

The king said to Tsadoq, "Take God's battle-chest back into town. Perhaps I will find favor in Yahweh's eyes, and he'll allow me to return and see it and its resting place once more. And if he should say, 'I am not pleased with you,' well then, here I am—let him do to me as he sees fit." P96,2

The king continued speaking to Tsadoq the priest, "Will you be a lookout for me? Be careful and get back safely to town, along with your and Ebyathar's sons—your son Ahima'ats and Ebyathar's son Yehonathan. Look, I'm going to stay awhile in the desert steppes until word from you arrives with news for me." P96,3

And so Tsadoq and Ebyathar returned God's battle-chest to Yerushalem, and remained there.

Meanwhile, Dawid made his way to the top of Mount Olive, weeping all the way up, with his head covered and walking barefoot. Likewise, everyone who was with him had also covered their heads, and they too were weeping all the way up the hill.

On the way, when Dawid was told that Ahithophel was one the men conspiring with Abshalom, he cried out, "Please Yahweh, make a fool of Ahithophel and his advice!"

As soon as Dawid reached the top of the hill (where it was customary for people to prostrate themselves in worship of their gods), he saw there waiting to meet him Hushai the Arkite, his tunic all torn and dirt smeared on his head. c

"If you come and escape with me," Dawid said to him, "you'll just be a burden to me. But if you go back into town, and say to Abshalom, 'Let me be your servant, O king! I was for a long time your father's servant, and now hence forward I will be your servant,' then you can ruin Ahithophel's counsel for me. Moreover, you should know—the priests Tsadoq and Ebyathar will be there with you. So that everything that you hear from the king's household, you can report to the two of them. Look, two of their sons are there with them—Tsadoq's boy

Ahima'ats and Ebyathar's son Yehonathan. So, through them you can send me news of everything that you all hear."

And so Dawid's friend Hushai arrived back in Yerushalem just as Abshalom was entering the city.

P96,4 [2.16]

Dawid had only passed a little beyond the crest of the hill when he was surprised to find Mephiba'al's servant Tsiba waiting to meet him, with a pair of donkeys loaded up, carrying two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred raisin-cakes, one hundred melons, and a skin of wine.

"Why do you have all these things?!" the king asked Tsiba.

"The asses are for the king's family to ride," Tsiba replied. "The bread and melons are for the house-servants to eat. And the wine is for anyone who gets thirsty when they're in the desert."

a "And where exactly is your master's son?" the king asked.

"Actually," Tsiba said, "he decided to to stay in Yerushalem, for he thought, 'Today is the day that the Yisra'elite nation will return my father's kingship to me!'"

"Well then, everything that Mephiba'al owns is now yours!" the king responded.

"I prostrate myself before you," Tsiba said. "Oh my lord and king, may I find favor in your eyes!"

A little while later, as Dawid the king was approaching Bahurim, he was surprised to come upon a man who was just then leaving there.

b The man, who was from Sha'ul's clan and whose name was Shim'iy Gera'sson, was cursing up a storm as he left the town. Then he began assaulting the oncoming party—throwing stones in every direction at Dawid, at all King Dawid's servants, and at all the soldiers and warriors with him.

During his barrage of insults, Shim'iy said something like this:

c "Run away! Run away, you murderous and worthless piece of garbage! Yahweh has brought down on you all the blood that you shed against the family of Sha'ul, in whose place you used to rule! And he's handed
d the kingship over to your son Abshalom! So, here you are now—this is all because of your wrong-doing. You really are a murderous man!"

e Abiyshai Tseruyahsson said to the king, "Why is this son-of-a-bitch cursing my lord the king? Please, allow me to go over there and take his head off!"

—
“What’s it matter to me or to any of you Tseruyahssons?” the king replied. “He’s cursing like that because Yahweh said to him—‘Curse Dawid.’ So what’s the point of asking him, ‘Why are you acting like this?’ ” P96,5

—
Dawid then addressed Abiyshai and all of his servants, “Look here, my very own son—the produce of my loins—is now seeking to take my life. And so now, in addition, if some Benyaminite takes comfort in cursing me because Yahweh told him to, what’s that to me? Perhaps Yahweh will see with his own eyes what is happening here, and repay me with something good in place of this cursing right now!” P96,6

Dawid and his men continued down the road; at the same time, Shim’iy walked along the hillside, keeping just opposite Dawid, all the while cursing him, throwing stones at him, and kicking up heaps of dirt.

**

Dawid and the company of men with him eventually came to Ayephim, where they stopped to refresh themselves. At about this time, Abshalom and the band of Yisra’elites who were with him—along with Ahithophel—entered Yerushalem. P97 a

Now it happened that when Dawid’s friend Hushai the Arkite came to see Abshalom, he said, “Long live the king! Long live the king!”

“This is how you show your loyalty to your friend?” Abshalom responded. “Why didn’t you flee with him?”

“No,” Hushai answered. “For whoever Yahweh has chosen—and who these people here have chosen, along with all the Yisra’elites—that’s who I’ll be loyal to. That’s who I’ll stay with. Put another way, who should I serve? Shouldn’t it be his son? Just as I stood in your father’s service, so now I will stand in your service!”

**

Abshalom said to Ahithophel, “Come up with a plan for what we should do!” P98 a

b Ahithophel advised Abshalom, “Go have sex with your father’s concubines, whom he left behind to guard the palace. Then all Yisra’el will understand that you have made yourself odious to your father, and all those allied with you will strengthen their grip on power.”

c They set up a tent for Abshalom on the roof of the palace, and then, in sight of all Yisra’el, he approached his father’s concubines and had sexual intercourse with them. (In those days, the advice that Ahithophel provided was similar to when a man would seek an oracle from God. That’s what Ahithophel’s advice was like, both for Dawid and for his son Abshalom.)

P98,1 [2.17] Then Ahithophel said to Abshalom, “Please, let me pick twelve thousand men—I’d like to leave immediately and go after Dawid tonight. I want to meet up with him when he’s weary and exhausted. Then I can thoroughly rout him. And when all his forces flee, I’ll find the king by himself and kill him. That way I will bring the entire populace over to your side. When they all turn back from the man whom you are hunting down, then the entire populace will be pacified.”

a Abshalom thought this was excellent advice, as did all Yisra’el’s elders.

P98,2 Then Abshalom said, “Come now, call over Hushai the Arkite also. Let’s hear what he has to say as well.”

Hushai came in to see Abshalom, whereupon Abshalom said to him, “This is what Ahithophel advised. Shall we follow his advice, or not? Give us your own opinion!”

P98,3 “In this particular instance,” Hushai replied to Abshalom, “Ahithophel has not given you good advice.”

“With respect to your father and his men,” Hushai continued, “you are well aware that they are excellent warriors and that, right now, they are full of anger—like a bear raging in the open because its cub has been killed. In any case, your father is experienced in warfare—he’s not going to let his men stop for the night. Look, right now he’s probably hiding in one of the holes or in some such place like that. Consider what would happen if you should attack them first: the person who hears about it will think, ‘The soldiers under Abshalom’s command must have suffered a great defeat! Even though he too is

a valiant fighter and has the heart of a lion, his courage melted away into nothing,’ for all Yisra’el knows that your father is a great warrior and that those with him are men of valor. For that reason, I advise that all Yisra’el, from Dan to Be’er Sheba, be mustered here to you—as many men as there are grains of sand on the seashore—and that you personally lead them into battle. Then, when we approach him hiding out in one of the places commonly found there, we’ll fall on him just like dew falls on the ground, and between him and the men with him, there won’t be even a single survivor. And if he pulls back into a town, then all Yisra’el will haul ropes to that town, and we’ll drag it all to the wadi, until not even a pebble can be found there.”

**

Abshalom and all the Yisra’elites thought the advice of Hushai the Arkite was better than Ahithophel’s advice. P99

—

(For Yahweh had given the command to frustrate Ahithophel’s excellent advice so that he could bring disaster down on Abshalom.) P99,1

—

Hushai said to the priests Tsadoq and Ebyathar, “This is what Ahithophel advised Abshalom and the elders of Yisra’el, and this is what I myself advised them. So then, be quick and send messengers to inform Dawid as follows, ‘Don’t stop for the night in the desert steppe; rather, you really must get all the way across. Otherwise, the king and all the people with him are at risk of being immediately destroyed.’ ” a

Meanwhile, Yehonathan and Ahima’ats were standing around waiting at Eyn Rogel. Because they couldn’t be seen going into town, b
a maid-servant was going to come to them and give them the message, at which point they would go and pass the message on to King Dawid. Unfortunately, however, a local official saw them and informed Abshalom. c

Hurrying away quickly, the two men came to the house of a man in Bahurim who had a cistern in his courtyard, and climbed down into it. The man’s wife grabbed a screen and spread it over the top of the cistern. She then spread barley groats over it, so that no one would realize anything was amiss. d

When Abshalom's servants approached the woman at her house, they said to her, "Do you know where Ahima'ats and Yehonathan are?"

"They passed by here—toward Mikal Waters," the woman replied.

They spent some time looking for them, but after finding nothing, they returned to Yerushalem.

P99,3 Shortly after they left, Ahima'ats and Yehonathan climbed out of the cistern and continued on their way. Upon their arrival, they delivered their report to King Dawid, "Get going! You need to get across the river as quickly as possible, for here's how Ahithophel advised to come after you."

Dawid and all the men with him immediately set out and crossed over the Yarden River, and it wasn't until daybreak that the last man remaining crossed over the river.

Meanwhile, when Ahithophel saw that his advice hadn't been followed, he packed up his donkey and went straightaway to his house in his native town. He put his affairs in order and then hung himself. After he died, he was buried in his family grave.

P99,4 a At about the time that Dawid arrived at Mahanayim, Abshalom crossed over the Yarden with all the Yisra'elite forces. Now Abshalom had made Amasa commander of his army, in place of Yo'ab. (Amasa was the son of a man named Yithra the Yisra'elite; Yithra had fathered Amasa with Abigal Nahash's daughter, the sister of Yo'ab's mother Tseruyah.)

The Yisra'elite forces and Abshalom made camp in the territory of Gil'ad.

P99,5 a Shortly after Dawid arrived at Mahanayim, Shobiy Nahash's son from Rabbat in the Ammonites' territory, Makir Ami'el's son from Lo-Dabar, and Barzillai the Gil'adite from the town of Rogelim brought bedding, drinking-cups, and bowls, along with wheat and barley (ground into flour and dried), beans and lentils (also dried), honey and cheese-curd, and sheep and choice cattle, so that Dawid and the men with him might eat, for they thought, "The men must be exhausted with hunger and thirst from their travels through the desert."



"Abshalom crossed over the Yarden with all the Yisra'elite forces."

Figure 15: The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 33, no. 161c. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

Dawid assembled all the forces with him, and appointed generals and division-leaders. He placed one-third of the men under Yo'ab's command, one-third under the command of Yo'ab's brother Abiyshai Tseruyahsson, and one-third under the command of Ittai the Gittite.

P99,6 [2.18]

At that time, the king announced to his men, "I myself will also march into battle with you!"

P99,7

His men, however, objected. "You must not march out with us. For if we retreat, our leaders won't be able to restore our courage. Likewise, if a large number of us die in battle, they won't be able to restore our courage either. Look now—we are roughly ten thousand in number. So, the best option is that you be our reserve force out of the city."

a

The king replied to them, "I shall do as you want." Then the king stood to the side of the town gate while his men marched out in their battalions and divisions.

P99,8

The king ordered Yo'ab, Abiyshai, and Ittai: "Please, go gentle with my boy Abshalom." But all the soldiers overheard the king as he was giving orders to his generals about how to treat Abshalom.

The army marched out to the battlefield to engage Yisra'el, and the fighting developed in the thickets in the Ephrayim woods. The Yisra'elite forces were soundly thrashed there by the men loyal to Dawid; the casualties there that day were very large—roughly twenty



"The Yisra'elite forces were soundly thrashed there by the men loyal to Dawid..."
 Figure 16: The Megiddo Ivories, Plate 32, no. 159c (reverse image). Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

thousand total. As the fighting there spread across all the surrounding area, the thickets that day swallowed up more men than the sword.

a Abshalom happened upon Dawid's forces while he was riding on his mule. As his mule went under the branches of a very large terebrinth, his head got caught in the tree. He hung there in mid-air while the mule beneath him kept going.

When one of the soldiers saw what had happened, he told Yo'ab. "Hey!" he said, "I saw Abshalom caught in the terebrinth!"

"Look here," Yo'ab replied to the man bringing him this news, "if you saw him, why didn't you strike him dead right then and there? Then I would have given you ten sheqels of silver and a fine belt!"

b But the soldier objected, "Even if I could have weighed out for myself one thousand sheqels of silver, I still wouldn't have done anything to harm the king's son, for we all overheard the king order
 c you and Abiyshai and Ittay when he said, 'Everyone without exception must take care not to hurt my boy Abshalom'. And anyway, if I had risked my life to commit such a crime, you would have stood off to the side and not stopped the king from learning every detail about what I had done."

Yo'ab countered, "There's no way that I'm going to wait any longer while you do nothing!" He then took three staves in hand and, while Abshalom was still caught alive in the terebrinth, thrust them right into his heart. Immediately, ten men—Yo'ab's personal equipment-bearers—surrounded Abshalom, and delivered the death blows to finish him off.

Yo'ab then blew on the shophar. In turn, the army—having been stopped by Yo'ab—pulled back from their pursuit of Yisra'el.

They took Abshalom's corpse, threw it into a large pit in the thickets, and then piled an enormous mound of stones on top of it. All the Yisra'elites, meanwhile, had fled the battlefield and were heading home.

While Abshalom was alive, he procured materials and erected a memorial stele in his own honor in King's Valley, for he thought, "I don't have a son who can make memorial offerings in my name." He named the stele after himself, and so it is still called today "Abshalom's stele."

d

Ahima'ats Tsadoqsson said, "Please, let me run and give the news to the king that Yahweh has vindicated him against his enemies."

P99,9 a

But Yo'ab replied, "You won't be the one delivering the news today—you can deliver the news some other day. However, you won't deliver any news today, for the king's son is dead."

Then Yo'ab called over to the Cushite, "Go! Tell the king what you have seen!"

The Cushite bowed down before Yo'ab in acknowledgement, and then took off running.

But Ahima'ats Tsadoqsson was persistent. He said to Yo'ab, "What's the problem? Please—let me go too right behind the Cushite."

Yo'ab cut him off, "Why in the world should you run now, my son? There is no news for you to deliver."

"What's the problem?! I want to go!"

"Fine. Go!"

Ahima'ats took off running down the Kikkar Road, and soon overtook the Cushite.

Dawid was sitting between the two town gates when the lookout went up to the top of the town wall above the gate. Surveying the horizon, he suddenly noticed a man running by himself. When the lookout shouted down and informed the king, the king thought, "If he's alone, he must have news." Meanwhile, the runner was getting closer and closer.

Then the lookout noticed another man running. Shouting down to the gatekeeper, the lookout said, "There's another man running by himself!"

The king thought, "This man must also be bringing news!"

The lookout continued, "I see now that the way the first one is running is like the way Ahima'ats Tsadoqsson runs!"

The king thought, "He's the good-news messenger—he must be coming with good news!"

Ahima'ats called out to the king, "Greetings!"

Then prostrating himself before the king, with his face to the ground, he said:

—

P99,10 "Blessed is Yahweh your god who has delivered up the men who raised their hands in rebellion against my lord the king!"

—

P99,11 "But is my boy Abshalom safe?" the king asked.

^a Ahima'ats answered, "I saw only that the confusion of battle was approaching your servant and the king's servant Yo'ab, but I don't know exactly what happened."

"Step aside and wait over there," the king ordered. He then stepped to the side, and stood quietly.

A moment later, the Cushite arrived. He announced, "May my lord the king be so informed that Yahweh has vindicated you today against all those who rebelled against you!"

—

P99,12 "But is my boy Abshalom safe?" the king asked.

The Cushite responded, "May the enemies of my lord the king, and may all those who rose up against you with evil intent, suffer that boy's fate."

—

P99,13 [2.19] Visibly shaking at the news, the king climbed up the stairs behind the gate, and began wailing, crying over and over as he went, "O my son Abshalom! O my son, my son Abshalom! If only I could have died instead of you! O Abshalom my son, my son!"

Yo'ab was informed right away: "You should know—the king is crying and making a scene with his mourning over Abshalom."

^a And so the victory that day turned into mourning for the entire army, for at that time the army heard reports that the king was in great pain over his son. At once the army slipped away quietly back into town—just like an army that has been humbled slinks away when they flee the battlefield.

All this while, the king had kept his face covered, and was crying out in a loud voice, "O my son, Abshalom Abshalom! O my son, my son!"

—
Yo'ab went to see the king in the guard-house, and challenged him, "Today you have brought shame to all your servants who today saved your life—as well as the lives of your sons and your daughters, and the lives of your wives and concubines! Loving those who despise you, and despising those who love you! For you let it be known today that you would prefer not to have any generals or servants! Indeed, I am certain right now that if Abshalom were still alive, all of us would now be dead—but then, that would be a good thing in your eyes! So then, go outside right now and apologize to your servants.

P99,14 a

b

c

d

—
"Because, I swear by Yahweh that if you don't go out there, no man will remain here with you tonight, and the result will be worse for you than anything you've ever experienced in your entire life!"

P99,15

—
Right away, the king left the guard-house and sat down at the town gate. When the army heard the news—"Look, the king has taken his place at the town gate!"—they all went to see him, while the Yisra'elites made their escape toward home.

P99,16

—
In the aftermath, throughout all the tribes of Yisra'el, people were arguing with one another:

P99,17

"The king himself delivered us from our enemies' power; it was he who personally saved us from the Philishtines' might."

"But then he fled the country to escape Abshalom."

"Yes, but Abshalom whom we anointed as our king has died in battle."

"Then why are you all now so reluctant to return the king to power?"

—
King Dawid sent a message to the priests Tsadoq and Ebyathar, saying, "Speak to the elders of Yehudah as follows: 'Why are you dragging your feet to return the king to his palace when all Yisra'el wishes for the king to go back home? You are my brothers—indeed, you are my very flesh and blood. So why are you backing away from returning

P99,18

a

b

c the king?’ In addition, you should say the following to Amasa: ‘Aren’t you too my flesh and blood? I swear, may God cause me harm—now and always—if you don’t serve me permanently as the commanding general of my army in place of Yo’ab.’ ”

In this fashion, he turned the opposing desires of Yehudah’s men into a single wish. As a result, they sent for the king with the message, “Come back—you and all your servants!”

And so the king began his journey back. By the time he reached the Yarden River, the people of Yehudah had come to Gilgal, traveling to meet the king and to bring him across the Yarden.

d Shim’iy Gera’sson, a Yaminite from the village of Bahurim, made
e haste and came down with the Yehudeans to meet King Dawid. A thousand men from Binyamin were with him, as was Tsiba, a retainer of Sha’ul’s family, along with his fifteen children and his twenty servants. All of them rushed into the Yarden opposite the king, and crossed the ford in order to bring the king’s family across and to please the king with their actions.

Shim’iy Gera’sson fell at the king’s feet as soon as he had crossed the Yarden, saying to him, “Please, my lord, don’t hold me accountable for any wrong that I have done you; please don’t give any thought
f to your servant’s wrong-doing on the day that my lord the king left Yerushalem, nor dwell on it unnecessarily. For your servant fully understands that he has grievously erred. But now, consider, your
g servant was the first of all the Yosephites to arrive today, travelling down here to meet the king.”

—
P99,19 In response, Abiyshai Tseruyahsson said, “Because of this, Shim’iy
a won’t be put to death?! After all, he did curse Yahweh’s anointed.”

—
P99,20 But Dawid objected, “What does it matter to me, or to any of you Tseruyahssons? Are you all now going to become my accusers? Is this really the day for a man to be to death anywhere in Yisra’el? Do you think I don’t realize that today I am once again king over all Yisra’el?”

The king then addressed Shim’iy, “Don’t worry—you’re not going to die,” swearing it on oath to him.

—
P99,21 Mephiba’al Sha’ulsson had come down at the same time to meet the king; he hadn’t washed his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor even

washed his clothes from the day the king fled Yerushalem until that day, when he came with peaceful intentions.

Upon arriving in Yerushalem to meet the king, the king said to him, “Why didn’t you leave Yerushalem with me, Mephiba’al?” a

“O my lord and king,” he replied, “please know that one of my servants deceived me. For when your servant thought to himself, ‘Let me pack up the donkey and ride on it to travel with the king,’ (for your servant is lame in foot), he slandered your servant to my lord the king. However, my lord the king is like one of God’s messengers—do what you think is fit. For even though my entire family deserved to die for the way they acted toward my lord the king, you still gave your servant a place at your table. How can I still claim I am in the right or again appeal to the king to show mercy?” b

**

The king cut him off, “Why do you continue to say such things? I thought you and Tsiba were going to divide up the field between yourselves.” P100 a

Mephiba’al replied, “Actually, he was going to take all of it for himself after my lord the king arrived back home safely.”

—

Meanwhile, Barzillai the Gil’adite had come down from the town of Rogelim. He crossed over the Yarden to meet the king, hoping to personally escort him back across. Now Barzillai was quite old—about eighty years of age—and he had furnished the king with supplies when the latter was staying in Mahanayim, as Barzillai was a very important man. P100,1

The king said to Barzillai, “You—come across with me, and I’ll take care of you back in Yerushalem!”

Barzillai replied, “How many years do I have left that it makes sense for me to accompany the king to Yerushalem? I’m eighty years old now—am I really going to tell the difference between what’s good and what’s bad when your servant tastes what he’s eating, or what he’s drinking? Or when I’m listening once more to the voices of singers and songstresses? Why should your servant become a burden any more to my lord the king? In a little while, your servant is going to cross over the Yarden with my lord the king—so why should the king

repay me with such a handsome reward? Please, allow your servant to go back and die in his home town, where my father and mother are buried. And instead consider this: let your servant Kimham cross over with the king—and then deal with him as you see fit!”

P100,2 The king said in response, “Kimham will definitely cross over with me; likewise, you will be very pleased with how I treat him—for anything that you could ask of me, I would do for you!”

And so the entire army crossed the Yarden, with the king crossing at the same time. The king then bid Barzillai goodbye, giving him a kiss and wishing him well, and Barzillai returned home.

P100,3 And so, when the king travelled through the Gilgal district, Kimham went with him. All the people of Yehudah supported him on the journey, as did half the people of Yisra’el.

a Almost immediately, Yisra’elites from all over were coming to see
b the king, saying to him, “Why did you let our brothers the Yehudeans steal you away, and carry the king and his family across the Yarden, along with all Dawid’s men?”

P100,4 The Yehudeans countered, “Because the king is closest to us. Why are you angry at all over this matter? Do we get our food from the king,
a or does he supply us with our daily necessities?”

P100,5 In answer to the Yehudeans, the Yisra’elites argued, “Of the twelve
a shares in the king—and also in Dawid—we have ten. We outrank you, so why do you make light of our complaint? Doesn’t our argument have priority—for us to be the ones who bring back the king?”

The Yehudeans’ argument, however, prevailed over the Yisra’elites’ argument.

P100,6 [2.20] Now, a particularly loathsome scoundrel was there among those
a arguing—a Benyaminite by the name of Sheba Bikriysson. Blowing on the shophar, he cried, “We have no share with Dawid! We have no portion with Yishai! All Yisra’elites, to your homes!”

Accordingly, all the Yisra’elites turned away from Dawid and followed Sheba Bikriysson. The Yehudeans, however, remained loyal
b to their king, from the Yarden region as far as Yerushalem.

When Dawid arrived at his palace in Yerushalem, he took the ten concubines whom he had left behind to watch over the palace and put them under house arrest. While he still saw to their maintenance, he did not have sexual intercourse with them. And so they remained confined to their quarters until the day of their death—bereft for life.

The king said to Amasa, “Mobilize the Yehudeans for me over the next three days, and then when you’re done, present yourself to me back here.”

And so Amasa went to mobilize Yehudah. But he delayed from the appointed time that the king had given him.

Dawid said to Abiyshai, “Sheba Bikriysson has now become a bigger problem for us than Abshalom. I’m ordering you personally to take your lord’s servants and go after him! Hopefully he hasn’t found any fortified towns that would enable him to evade our search.”

And so Yo’ab’s men, the king’s personal guard, and a large contingent of warriors marched out after him, leaving Yerushalem to chase down Sheba Bikriysson.

They were at the large rock located in Gib’on when Amasa showed up to meet them. Yo’ab on that day was wearing his tunic, and had on a sword belt that had been cinched over his loins, with a sword in its sheath. As he came out to meet Amasa, the sword slid out.

Upon greeting Amasa—“How are you, brother?”—Yo’ab grabbed hold of Amasa’s chin with his right hand, as if to kiss him. But Amasa wasn’t watching out for the sword that was in Yo’ab’s left hand. Yo’ab struck him right in the abdomen with his sword, spilling his intestines out to the ground. He didn’t bother to strike him a second time, for he was as good as dead.

As Yo’ab and his brother Abiyshai left to resume their pursuit of Sheba Bikriysson, one of Yo’ab’s retainers stood



P100,7

a

P100,8

a

P100,9

*“All the
Yisra’elites...
followed Sheba
Bikriysson.”
Figure 17. The
Megiddo
Ivories, plate 22,
no. 125b
(detail).*

over Amasa and called out, "Who here likes seeing what Yo'ab just did? Are any of Dawid's men going to follow Yo'ab now?"

Amasa meanwhile was still rolling around in his own blood in the middle of the road. When this man saw that all the soldiers were just standing there, he rolled Amasa out of the road into a field and threw a tunic over him, having realized that anyone who happened to come upon him would otherwise stop and stare. As soon as he had shoved him out of the road, all the men moved on to join Yo'ab and pursue Sheba Bikriysson. (By that time, he had passed through the tribal regions of Yisra'el, going as far as the towns of Abelah and Beth-Ma'akah, and the watering-holes nearby).

a

P100,10 So, after getting themselves organized, they resumed their pursuit of him. They caught up to him and cornered him in Abelah Beth-Ma'akah. They threw up a siege-mound against the town, which stood opposite the outer wall. At the same time, the soldiers who were

a

with Yo'ab were trying to undermine the inner wall and make it fall. A wise woman shouted out from inside the town, "Hear me! Hear me! Please tell Yo'ab to come here so that I can speak to him!"

As he approached her, the woman asked, "Are you Yo'ab?"

"Yes I am."

"Then please listen to what your maid-servant has to say."

"I'm listening."

b c

"At first, the townspeople were saying, 'They really ought to ask around in Abelah—then they would be done with it.' I have an agreement with Yisra'elites loyal to Dawid. You're trying to slaughter entire towns and bereave mothers across Yisra'el—why are you destroying Yahweh's land like that?"

d

e

**

P101 "That's not it at all!" Yo'ab answered her. "Causing destruction or harm is the last thing I would do! What you say is simply not true! A certain man from the hills of Ephrayim by the name of Sheba Bikriysson has dared to rebel against King Dawid. Hand him alone over, and then I'll pull back from the town and go away."

"Okay then," the woman said to Yo'ab. "We'll throw his head down to you from the top of the town wall."

The woman then went to the townspeople with her sage advice. And so they cut off Sheba Bikriysson's head and threw it down to Yo'ab. He in turn blew on the shophar and his men left the town, scattering in all directions toward their homes, while Yo'ab himself returned to Yerushalem to see the king.

Yo'ab served as head of the armed forces of Yisra'el; Benayahu Yehoyedasson was head of the king's personal guard; Adoram oversaw the king's labor-gangs; Yehoshaphat Ahiludsson was the head secretary; Shewa was the head scribe; and Tsadoq and Ebyathar were the head priests. (In addition, Ira the Ya'irite was Dawid's personal priest.)

During Dawid's time, there was once a famine that lasted three years without let up. When Dawid sought an oracle from Yahweh about it, Yahweh responded:

"It is to punish Sha'ul and his bloodthirsty family, because he put the Gib'onites to death."

The king summoned the Gib'onites and spoke to them. (Now the Gib'onites were not of Yisra'elite descent, but rather they were an offshoot of the Amorites. Even though the Yisra'elites had sworn an oath of peace with them, Sha'ul nonetheless sought to destroy them in his fervor for the Yisra'elite and Yehudean people.)

Dawid said to the Gib'onites, "What shall I do for you? How should I make amends so that you will have friendly relations with Yahweh's land?"

The Gib'onites replied, "We don't have any gold or silver as compensation from either Sha'ul or his family. Nor is there any man in Yisra'el whom we can put to death as recompense."

"Whatever you tell me, I will do for you."

They said to the king, "That man—because he plotted against us and because he wiped us out, we were too weakened to hold on to any territory within Yisra'el's borders. Let seven of his male descendants be given to us and then we'll throw them to their deaths as a sacrifice to Yahweh in the ancestral village of Yahweh's chosen one, Gib'at Sha'ul."

The king replied, "I hereby grant your request."

However, the king had compassion on Mephiba'al, the son of Yehonathan Sha'ulsson on account of the oath to Yahweh between them—that is, between Dawid and Yehonathan Sha'ulsson.

The king took the two sons of Ritspah Ayyahsdaughter whom she bore to Sha'ul—Armoni and Mephiba'al—and the five sons of Mikal Sha'ulsdaughter whom she bore to Adri'el Barzillaisson the Meholathite and then turned them over to the Gib'onites.

Calling Yahweh as witness, they threw them off the cliff, all seven of them falling together. In this manner, they were put to death at the very first of the harvest days, just as the barley harvest was starting.

Ritspah Ayyahsdaughter took some sackcloth and spread it over the bodies at the bottom of the cliff. From the beginning of the harvest until the bodies had become water-logged from the rain, she didn't let any birds gather on them during the day, nor any animals at night.

When Dawid was told what Sha'ul's concubine Ritspah Ayyahsdaughter had done, he went and took the bodily remains of Sha'ul and his son Yehonathan from the possession of Yabesh-Gil'ad's ruling men. (For these men had stolen them from town plaza in Beth-Shan, where the Philishtines had hung them after killing Sha'ul in Gilbo'a.) Once he had brought the remains of Sha'ul and his son Yehonathan back from there, they collected the corpses of the men who had been cast from the cliff and then buried the remains of Sh'aul and his son Yehonathan in the Binyaminites' territory in a side-chamber in the tomb of his father Qish.

And so, once all that the king commanded had been carried out, God was fully supplicated on behalf of the land.

**

P102 At this time the Philishtines were still at war with Yisra'el. On one occasion, Dawid—accompanied by his officers—had gone into battle and had become exhausted from fighting the Philishtines. Meanwhile, a certain Yishbi from Nob (a descendant of the Repha'im who had a bronze spearhead weighing three hundred sheqels and who wore hadashah-armor) thought he would try to kill Dawid.

Abiyshai Tseruyahsson, however, came to his aid, attacking and killing the Philishtine. It was at that time that Dawid's men made a

vow to him, saying “You must never again go out with us into battle,
lest you extinguish the lamp of Yisra’el!”

**

Sometime after this happened, when the war was still raging with the Philishtines in the town of Gob, Sibbekai the Hushahite killed Saph, who was descended from the Repha’im. P103

As the war continued to rage with the Philishtines in Gob, Elhanan Ya’ray-Oregimsson from Beth-Lehem killed Golyath of Gath, whose spear shaft was like the beam on a weavers’ loom. P103,1
a

And still the war raged on in the town of Gath. Now it so happened that there was a certain man—a real hot-head—who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, and who also was descended from the Repha’im. When he taunted Yisra’el, Yehonathan Shima’sson (Dawid’s cousin) struck him down and killed him. P103,2
a

These four men were descended from the Repha’im in the town of Gath, and all four fell in battle at the hands of Dawid and his men.

**

Dawid recited the words of this song to Yahweh on the day that Yahweh saved him from the clutches of his enemies, and from the clutches of Sha’ul: P104 [2.22] a

“Yahweh is my rock and my fortress—the one who grants me an escape—god of my rock, where I seek refuge
A shield for me, a horn impelling me to victory—my stronghold on high, my place of escape
The one who grants me victory—who delivers me from violence
‘May Yahweh,’ I cry out, ‘be praised!—Let me be victorious over my enemies!’

When deathly waves engulfed me—when treacherous floodwaters overwhelmed me

When She'ol wrapped its ropes around me—when Death laid its
 snares before me
Whenever I was in trouble, I would cry 'Yahweh!'—to my god I would
 cry out
In his palace, he heard my voice—my plea for help reached his ears!

The earth quakes and shudders all over—heaven's pillars totter and
 shake back and forth—because he burns with anger
b Smoke rises from his nostrils—he breathes fire and destroys—fireballs
 flash from his body
He bends the sky and descends—black clouds swirling under his feet
c He mounts a sphinx and flies off—showing himself on the shoulders
 of the wind
He envelops himself in thickets of darkness—masses of water, swirling
 black clouds
Out of the brilliant light preceding him—fireballs flash forth.

Yahweh claps thunder out of the skies—God Most High makes himself
 heard
Shooting down arrows, scattering them everywhere—flashing light-
 ning, bringing terror
The floors of the sea suddenly appear—the world's foundations are
 revealed
Laid bare by Yahweh's rebuke—exposed by the blast of his nostrils.

He reaches down from the heights, he snatches me up—he draws me
 from the raging waters
He saves me from my enemy, however mighty—from those who hate
 me, though they are stronger than I
They openly attack me when I'm in deepest distress—then Yahweh is
 a staff that supports me
He brings me into an open field—tears me from their clutches, out of
 his desire for me.

Yahweh repays me in proportion to my goodness—in accord with the
 purity of my actions he rewards me
Indeed, I have kept faithfully to Yahweh's paths—I am not guilty of
 contravening his ways



"He mounts a sphinx and flies off..."

Figure 18: *The Megiddo Ivories*, Plate 7, no. 22b. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

Truly, all his precepts are in the forefront of my mind—never could I
 turn aside from his laws
 I act with integrity towards him—guarding myself always from doing
 wrong
 Yahweh rewards me by the measure of my goodness—in proportion
 to my purity, which he sees with his own eyes.

With the pious, you are pious in return—with the heroically perfect,
 you behave perfectly
 With the one who is sacramentally pure, you act with pure intent—but
 with the perverted, you keep your distance

d

To a humble people, you grant victory—but when you see the haughty,
you bring them low
Truly, you are my lamp, Yahweh!—Yahweh, who lights the way for
me through the darkness
Indeed, because of you I can outrun a raiding party—through my god
I can leap over walls
The god whose path is unblemished—whose word is purified by
fire—who shields all those who seek refuge in him.

Truly, who is god apart from Yahweh?—Who is a rock if not our god?
The god who is a secure refuge for me—who sets me free on a perfect
road
Who makes me sure-footed as an ibex—who stands me up in the
highest of places
Who makes my hands skilled in warfare—who fashions my arms into
a bow of bronze.

Grant me your shield to secure my victory—in answering my prayer,
make me great!
Make my stride wide over the ground below me—keep my ankles
from stumbling!
Then I'll go after my enemies and destroy them!—I won't return until
they're wiped out!
Once I wipe them out, once I crush them—they won't be able to
stand—they'll have fallen under my feet.

You clothe me with the strength to do battle—you cut down at my feet
those who rise up against me
As for my enemies, show me the back of their necks—those who hate
me, and I will annihilate them
They look for relief, but none will save them—to Yahweh, but he won't
answer them
I grind them up like clods of dirt—like garbage in the streets—I stamp
them down, I crush them.

You deliver me from those who contend with my people—you watch
over me as the head of nations—a people whom I'm unfamiliar
with brings me tribute

Foreigners humiliate themselves before me—their ears prick up and
they make a show of hearing me
Foreigners are utterly confounded—they come trembling out from
their fortresses.

Long live Yahweh! Blessed be my rock!—Exalted be my victorious
god, my rock!
The god who grants me vengeance—who subjugates peoples under
my rule—who helps me get away from my enemies
You set me above those who rise up against me—from the most violent
of men, you save me.

Therefore I praise you, Yahweh, among the nations!—In honor of your
name, I sing this song!
The one who multiplies the victories of his king—who acts with kind-
ness towards his anointed one—to Dawid and to his descen-
dants, for eternity.”

**

These are the last words of Dawid:

P105 [2.23]

“Utterance of Dawid Yishaisson—utterance of the man raised up on
high
the anointed one of Ya’aqob’s god—Yisra’el’s foremost singer of songs:

a

‘Yahweh’s spirit spoke through me—his very word, on my tongue
The god of Yisra’el said—to me, Yisra’el’s rock spoke:

‘A man who rules over men must be just—a ruler with the fear of God
Like morning light when the sun dawns—a morning without clouds
Thanks to sunlight, thanks to rain—grass shoots from the earth.’

Indeed, is not my family right with El?—For he made with me a lasting
agreement—laid out clearly and preserved in every detail
Truly, all my victories and all that I desire—does he not cause them to
flourish?

b

Worthless men are like the driven bramble, all of them—for they
should not be taken in hand
Should any man touch them—he would be run through by the iron
c tip at the end of a spear shaft—by fire they surely would be
burned up on the spot.' "

**

P106 a These are the names of the military heroes who served under Dawid:
b Yosheb-Bashebeth of Tahkemon. He was chief quartermaster. His
c chief pleasure was the 'etsni' against eight hundred men fallen in
battle at a single time.

—
P106,1 a After him was his cousin, El'azar Ahohiysson. He was one of the
'generals'—the warriors with Dawid when they hurled insults at the
Philishtines who had gathered there for battle. When the Yisra'elites
launched an attack, he immediately went on a rampage against the
Philishtines, not letting up until his hands wearied of gripping his
sword. Yahweh won a great victory that day, the army always follow-
ing right behind El'azar, except when stopping to strip the dead.

—
P106,2 After him was Shammah Aga'sson of Harar. Some Philishtines had
at one time gathered at Hayyah, where there was a plot of land over-
grown with lentil plants. While the army was retreating from the
Philishtines, Shamma took a stand right in the middle of the plot,
saving it and killing many Philishtines. In this fashion, Yahweh won a
great victory.

—
P106,3 These three men were promoted out of the 'Thirty' to be generals. Once
just before the harvest, they went to see Dawid at the Adullam cave
while a Philistine band was camping in Repha'im Valley. (Dawid
a at that time was stationed at his desert fortress, while a Philistine
garrison was in Beth-Lehem.) Overcome with a strong urge to drink,
Dawid called out, "I wish someone would give me water to drink
from the well in Beth-Lehem next to the town gate."

—
P106,4 And so the three warriors broke into the Philishtines' camp and drew
water from that very well in Beth-Lehem. But when they brought it

back to Dawid, he wasn't willing to drink it. Instead he poured it out as an offering to Yahweh, pronouncing, "May Yahweh damn me if I do this! Is the blood of these men who went at the risk of their lives worth this?" Thus he wasn't willing to drink anything. These are the feats the three warriors performed.

Abiyshai, the brother of Yo'ab Tseruyahsson, was leader of the generals. He decorated his spear with the marks of three hundred kills, for which he won a great reputation among the generals of the army. (Was there any army general more famous than he?) Although he became the generals' leader, he did not join their ranks.

Benayahu Yehoyadasson, a most worthy man from the town of Qabtse'el, was chief of works. He was the one who killed the two Ari'els from Mo'ab; he was the one who went down into the cistern and killed the lion during a snowstorm. He was also the one who killed the Egyptian—a very imposing man—when the Egyptian was holding a spear in his hand. Benayahu attacked him with a club, and then, tearing the spear out the Egyptian's hand, killed him with his spear. These are the feats Benayahu Yehoyadasson performed, earning for himself a great reputation with the generals of the army. He was more renowned than the 'Thirty,' but he did not enter the ranks of the generals. Dawid appointed him head of his personal body-guard.

Yo'ab's brother Asah'el was one of the 'Thirty';

his cousin Elhanan from Beth-Lehem;

Shamma of Herod;

Eliqa of Herod;

Helets of Pelet;

Iyra Iqqeshsson

of Theqo'a;

P106,13	Abi'ezer of Annathoth	—
P106,14	Mebunnai of Hushah;	—
P106,15	Tsalmon of Ahohah;	—
P106,16	Mahrai of Netophah;	—
P106,17	Heleb Ba'anahsson of Netophah;	—
P106,18	Ittai Ribaisson of the Binyaminites' Gib'ah;	—
P106,19	Benayahu of Parathon;	—
P106,20	Hiddai from Ga'ash Ravines;	—
P106,21	Abi-Albon of Erbah;	—
P106,22	Azmaweth of Barhum;	—
P106,23	Elyahba of Sha'albon;	—
P106,24	Yashen's sons, Yehonathan;	—
P106,25	Shammah of Harar;	—
P106,26	Ahi'am Shararsson of Arar;	—
P106,27	Eliphelet Ahasbaysson the Ma'akahite;	—
P106,28	Eli'am Ahithophelsson of Gilon;	—
P106,29	Hetsrai of Karmel;	—
P106,30	Pa'arai of Arbah;	—
P106,31	Yigal Nathansson of Tsoba;	—

Baniy of Gad;	—	P106,32
Tseleq the Ammonite;	—	P106,33
Nahrai of Be'erah, equipment-bearer for Yo'ab Tseruyahsson;	—	P106,34
Ira of Yithrah;	—	P106,35
Garib of Yithrah;	—	P106,36
Uriyah the Hittite. Thirty-seven men in total.	—	P106,37

**

Because Yahweh was still smoldering in anger at Yisra'el, he incited Dawid against them, saying "Go and take a census of Yisra'el and Yehudah." P107 [2.24]

The king ordered Yo'ab, the commanding general of the army stationed with him, "Please, canvas all the tribes of Yisra'el, from Dan all the way down to Be'er-Sheba, and make an accounting of the people, so that I may know how many of them there are."

a

Yo'ab protested, "May Yahweh your god double the people in number a hundred times over, and may my lord the king live to see it! But as for my lord the king, why does he desire that this thing be done?"

P107,1

a

However, the king's command prevailed over the arguments of Yo'ab and the senior officers of the military; and so Yo'ab and the senior officers departed from the king's presence to take a census of the people, that is, Yisra'el. Crossing the Yarden, they camped in Ero'er, just north of the town situated between the Wadi Gad and Ya'zer. They first went to Gil'ad and to the Lowermost Lands (that is, Hodshi); they then went to Dan, Ya'an, and all the way around to Tsidon. They went to the fortress city Tsor, and then to all the towns of the Hiwites and Kena'anites, finally ending up in the far south of Yehudah at Be'er-Sheba.

b

Having canvassed the entire land, after a period of nine months and twenty days, they arrived back in Yerushalem. Yo'ab presented

the king with the count from the census of the people: Yisra'el numbered eight hundred thousand able-bodied men, capable of fighting, while the Yehudeans numbered five hundred thousand men.

But after completing the census of his people, Dawid was immediately struck with regret in his heart.

**

P108 He cried out to Yahweh, "I have committed a grievous sin in doing this! Please Yahweh, I beg you, forgive your servant of his sin, for I have been extremely foolish."

At about the time Dawid rose in the morning...

**

P109 An oracle of Yahweh came to the prophet Gad, Dawid's seer, as follows: "Go and say to Dawid, 'Thus has Yahweh spoken: 'I will hold out three options to you. Choose one of them, and that is how I'll punish you.''"

So Gad went to see Dawid and informed him of this. He said, "What will it be—seven years of famine in your country, three months of you fleeing from your adversaries as they chase after you, or three
a days of plague in your country? Now, consider carefully what answer I should return to the one who sent me."

—

P109,1 "This is very difficult for me," Dawid replied. "Please, I would like for us to fall into Yahweh's hands, for his compassion is very great. I don't want to fall into men's hands."

And so Yahweh put a plague on Yisra'el, beginning that morning until the appointed time. Out of all the people, from Dan to Be'er-Sheba, seventy-seven thousand men died. But when the divine messenger sent his hand out against Yerushalem in order to destroy it, Yahweh regretted these terrible events. He said to the divine messenger charged with destroying the people, "Enough! Stop your
a attack!" just as Yahweh's messenger had arrived at the threshing floor of Arawnah the Yebusite.

—

P109,2 When Dawid saw that the messenger was killing the people, he said to Yahweh, "Look here—I am the one who has done wrong; I am the one

who has sinned. These people are my sheep—what have they done wrong? Please, put your hand in punishment against me instead, and against my family!”

**

Later that day Gad came to see Dawid. He said to him, “Go and build an altar to Yahweh at Arawnah the Yebusite’s threshing floor.” And so Dawid carried out Gad’s order, just as Yahweh had commanded. P110

When Arawnah looked out in the distance, he saw Dawid and his officials crossing onto his property. Hurrying outside, he prostrated himself before the king, face to the ground, and asked “Why has my lord the king come to see his servant?”

“To purchase the threshing-floor from you,” Dawid replied, “and to build an altar to Yahweh, so that the plague will be stopped from attacking the people.”

“Take it, my lord and king,” Arawnah said, “and do what you think is best. Look—here are cattle for a burnt-offering, and the threshing-sleds and yokes can be used for firewood!”

Arawnah the king gave all of it to the king. a

—
“May Yahweh your god look favorably on you!” Arawnah said to him. P110,1

“No!” objected the king. “I really must purchase this from you at a fair price. I can’t offer up burnt offerings to my god Yahweh at no cost to myself.”

And so Dawid purchased the threshing-floor and the cattle for fifty sheqels of silver. Then he built an altar there to Yahweh, offering up burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. In this way, Yahweh was entreated on behalf of the land, and the plague was stopped from Yisra’el.

Total sentences in the book:
One thousand five hundred and six

a

Notes and comments

This is first and foremost a translation; in writing it, I have limited myself to consulting only the Masoretic text and a standard Hebrew-English lexicon and Hebrew grammar, and, of course, the photos and drawings of the Megiddo Ivories. As I discussed in the introductory translator's note to the reader on pages vi-xii, my principal focus has been on how best to bring the vivid and dynamic prose of the Book of Shmu'el into English, striving to produce a "fluent" translation that is also faithful to the literal meaning of the Hebrew. It was not my intention to write a traditional Biblical commentary, or a work of literary or historical criticism. Because I wanted to engage with the text solely on my own, without the influence of the standard scholarly views and opinions, I made a conscious decision in writing this book not to consult any translations, nor to examine the standard commentaries, nor—with a couple of exceptions—to read academic studies or scholarly papers on the topic of Shmu'el.

I focus my comments below primarily on select passages that will give readers some understanding of my translation choices when dealing with especially difficult or unusual prose. While my comments are relatively extensive, I have not aimed to be comprehensive and have not necessarily commented on every difficult or unusual passage. I have in general avoided emending the Masoretic text; but on those occasions where I have adopted a different reading, I point that out in a note. Finally, I have in places used the notes to offer up brief comments on the author's use of language and to point out various quirks or noteworthy items in the narrative. Although my notes focus primarily on issues of translation, it was impossible for me not to bring to my work here certain assumptions about the history of Yisra'el and Yehudah and the circumstances surrounding the composition of the Book of Shmu'el. Given that, I felt some obligation to the reader to explain these, which I accordingly have done in the lengthy note below on pages 144-145.

[/https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/oip52.pdf](https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/oip52.pdf)

[/https://archive.org/details/Aleppo_Codex](https://archive.org/details/Aleppo_Codex)
[/https://archive.org/details/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft](https://archive.org/details/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft)
[/https://archive.org/details/GeseniusHebrewGrammarPdf](https://archive.org/details/GeseniusHebrewGrammarPdf)

For the Masoretic text, I began this translation using the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (or BHS). However, this was awkward to use on the commuter train (where I did nearly all of this translation). As a result, I switched very early on in my work to the quite wonderful iPhone app Tanakh for All, which I found—much to my surprise—superior to the BHS for the purposes of translation. In addition to the Tanakh for All app, I regularly consulted the very beautiful photographic facsimile pdf of the Aleppo Codex, which can be found at the Internet Archive.

The lexicon and grammar that I used—both also found at the Internet Archive—were the 1906 edition of William Gesenius’ *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, as edited and updated by Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles Briggs and the 2nd English edition of *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, as edited and enlarged by E. Kautsch and A.E. Cowley (abbreviated below, respectively, as “BDB” and “GKC”).

**

Notes to P1

1a Yerohamsson: In classical Hebrew, surnames were almost always based on either the patronym (literally, “*so-and-so’s son*” or “*so-and-so’s daughter*”) or the gentilic (“the *place-name-ite*”); on occasion, the surname is based on a marriage relationship (“*so-and-so’s wife*”). In my translation, I have consistently treated these constructions as the surname.

1b Yahweh of Armies: The construction “Yahweh of Armies” is understood by the principal author of Shmu’el as the full and proper name of the god of Yisra’elite and Yehudean tribes. That the author understood this in this way can be seen most clearly in Dawid’s prayer to Yahweh in P81,1 when he qualifies “your name” with “Yahweh of Armies.” The name is one of several pieces of evidence in Tanakh that indicate Yahweh was originally a god of war. Yahweh in his manifestation as god of war seems to have had a special connection with Shiloh, which in the Book of Shmu’el is presented as one of the primary cultic centers/temples for Yahweh, before Dawid’s establishment of the royal-sponsored cult in Yerushalem. Not only is the name “Yahweh of Armies” used regularly in connection with Shiloh, but in the traditions known to our author Shiloh was the principal home of Yahweh’s “battle-chest” before its transfer to Yerushalem. (For more on the battle-chest, see notes 4,1c, 8c and 8d below.)

1c to her sons and daughters: The Hebrew reads “to all her sons and daughters.” Classical Hebrew authors commonly sprinkled the word *kōl* (“the whole of, all, every, entire”) throughout their prose as a way of intensifying or emphasizing a noun or noun phrase. In many instances, it would not be natural for a native English-speaker

to use “whole of, all, every” in that fashion; in those cases, the word is best left untranslated (as I do here and in dozens of other places in this translation).

1d her condition: I take Hebrew *srth* to refer to Hannah’s barren condition (literally, “her distressful condition” from the root *srh* “distress”), and not to refer to Peninah. Most translations read this as “her rival wife” from the root *šrr*. However, “rival wife” is a fabricated definition of this root—if it were real, it would occur only here in Tanakh. (The occurrence in Lev 18.19 that is cited by BDB should be read simply “to provoke” and not “to make a rival wife.”) In addition, “rival wife” doesn’t fit well in the narrative flow of our story: if Peninah were vexing Hannah, there would be no need for Elqanah to ask Hannah why she was upset, as the answer would have been obvious.

1e causing her to shake all over: The Hebrew root *r’m* is commonly associated with thunder, but by extension the verb is sometimes used to describe shaking actions, as here. Other examples cited by BDB include Ez 27.35 and Job 39.19.

1f if you remember me and don’t forget me: The author has written Hannah’s speech in a style that is best understood as an attempt to represent the everyday spoken Hebrew of his time in a realistic fashion. He does this quite consistently throughout the book of Shmu’el, and this is one of the things that makes book especially interesting to scholars of Hebrew. The author’s imitation of everyday spoken Hebrew occurs so frequently that I didn’t think it necessary to note every instance. In most cases, however, it should be clear to the reader from my style of translation.

1g Once the boy is weaned—then I’ll bring him: The author presents the conversation between Elqanah and Hannah in a way that suggests they have been arguing over when to bring Shmu’el to Shiloh for his dedication. Elqanah wants to do it now, Hannah insists on waiting longer. Hannah, whom our author portrays as a loving and devoted mother, seems reluctant to give up her boy—hence she delays weaning him.

1h The boy was still just a boy: The practice was to nurse children much longer than we do today. Shmu’el likely would have been weaned sometime between the ages of three and six.

1a Hannah prayed: In the Aleppo Codex and other Masoretic manuscripts, Hannah’s prayer—although clearly a song—is recorded as prose. For ease of understanding, I have laid out this passage as poetry—as I have with the other songs and poetic passages that are in prose format in the Masoretic text. In Shmu’el, the only passage that is laid out as poetry in the Masoretic text is P104—a variant of Psalm 18 that was added later to the text and that is not from the original author’s hand.

2a the priest’s boy: Could also be translated “the priest’s servant.” Hebrew *na’ar* can mean either “boy, youth” or “servant, retainer, steward.” The author of Shmu’el is especially fond of using *na’ar* with the latter meaning, although here I believe the author most likely intended the former meaning. See P49, for example, where *na’ar* (“serving-lad”) indicates the title of a position in Yahweh’s temple at Nob.

Notes to P2

2b the gift that has been given over to Yahweh: Literally, “the request that (t)he(y) requested of Yahweh.” The vocabulary here (*š’l*) is identical to Hannah’s speech to Eli in her dedication of Shmu’el, except that it is in the qal construction (“request”) rather than the hiphil (“give”). The author is likely punning here, playing on the different nuances of the qal and hiphil (writing the qal but knowing the reader would mentally supply the meaning of the hiphil). I have used “give” in my translation because it produces a more natural English and because it makes explicit the connection with the dedication speech.

Notes to P3

3a Did I not reveal myself: The Hebrew text reads “Did I reveal myself?” However, the context makes it clear the question demands a “yes” answer, which I have reflected in my translation.

This long speech shows the influence of the Deuteronomist editor, and is a good place to present some brief thoughts on the composition of the Book of Shmu’el. My view, which is in broad agreement with the ideas first proposed by the German scholar Martin Noth, is that the books of Deuteronomy, Yehoshu’a (Joshua), Judges, Shmu’el, and Kings—what Noth and other scholars call the Deuteronomistic History—were composed together as a unified work in the exilic period sometime in the first half of the 6th century BCE. Unlike Noth, however, I follow other scholars who see this history as the work not of a single author, but of multiple authors (often referred to as the Deuteronomistic School). This collection of authors was likely comprised of high officials in Yahweh’s cult at Yerushalem and like-minded officials from the former royal Yehudean court. The primary ideas espoused by these authors have their direct antecedents in the religious reforms of King Yoshiyah during the last quarter of the 7th century BCE (and in fact an early version of Deuteronomy may have been written at that time as justification for these reforms). Half a century or so after Yoshiyah’s reforms, the authors of the Deuteronomistic History composed their own work in an attempt to explain to Yahweh’s adherents (and to themselves) why the “one true God” had invalidated his treaty with his people, resulting in the destruction of his temple in Yerushalem, the subjugation of his people to the Babylonian king, and then—ultimately—his people’s exile from the land he had given them.

From our modern-day perspective, what is especially interesting about the composition of the Deuteronomistic History is that it represents the beginning of a search by “Yahweh’s people” for a new way of worshipping their god that is centered on “the book.” The Deuteronomistic History was almost certainly written with the intent that it would serve as a sacred teaching (or what we today would call scripture) that would form the foundation of a new way of worship no longer dependent on the sacrificial cult. While the sacrificial cult in Yerushalem was revived after the exile and remained in place into the first century of the common era, scripture-based worship proved much more practical for a people spread across the Levant and Mesopotamia, and consequently, within just two centuries after the end of the Babylonian exile, Judaism had largely become a religion of the book.

Each of the five books of the Deuteronomistic History has its own distinctive prose style. Given that, it is tempting to suppose that there were separate lead authors for each—one for Deuteronomy, one for Yehoshu’a, one for Judges, one for Shmu’el, and one for Kings (in the Masoretic manuscripts, Kings is a single book). If all five books were written to serve as a single work, then the author of Deuteronomy (who

may also have been the principal author of Yehoshu'a) likely served as the editor-in-chief; it was he who set the overall theme of this history by inserting thematic passages in each of the books written by the other members of his school. These passages, in my opinion, are unlikely to have been additions by a later hand, because in many cases they are integral to the narrative arc of the individual books in which they appear.

Based on a simple examination of the literary techniques and prose style in each of the books of the Deuteronomistic History, I think it is clear that the principal author of the Book of Shmu'el was the most talented writer of the group responsible for composing this history. It is not so surprising, then, that after our lead editor (the Deuteronomist) assigned the most important material in his history to himself (the giving of the law, and the entrance to and possession of the land), he gave the next most important material—the foundation of the Dawidic dynasty, the selection of Yerushalem as the home of Yahweh's cult, and the sin of kingship—to the best writer of his "school." While we know nothing about the personal life of Shmu'el's principal author, it is noteworthy that all the stories in the book take place within a fifty mile radius of Yerushalem. Given that, it is reasonable to suppose that our author was a priest or scribe who lived in Yerushalem, and who never travelled more than two or three days from home to collect stories and materials about Shmu'el, Sha'ul, and Dawid.

3b which I have demanded here at my dwelling: The Hebrew here is difficult, but not "unintelligible" (contra BDB, p. 733).

3c you will regard your own dwelling place as cramped: The Hebrew here is difficult to a modern-day reader, but there is no reason to suppose that a native speaker during the author's time would have necessarily had difficulty understanding this sentence.

3d the entire male increase: Another difficult passage in Hebrew. A more literal translation would be, "[With respect to] all the increase in your family, the men will die off."

4a break-through vision: This appears to be a technical term for a particular type of vision in which a seer receives a god's oracle, but the exact nuance of this term (and how it differs from a other types of visions) is unclear.

Note to P4

4,1a when Eli...when the lamp...when Shmu'el...: The primary way that subordinate clauses are indicated in Hebrew is through word order. From the word order here, it is clear that the author intended this to be a single sentence. I have preserved this sentence structure in the English translation, but have reordered the clauses in order to render it into natural-sounding English. This passage contains a nice example of how *parashot* are used for literary effect—by inserting a break in the middle of the sentence, our author creates an element of suspense that heightens the drama of Yahweh's appearance to Shmu'el.

Notes to P4,1

4,1b divine lamp: Occasionally, as here, nouns in genitive construct carry the meaning of an adjective. Hence "divine lamp" rather than "God's lamp" (*nr 'lhym*) and "divine battle-chest" rather than "God's battle-chest" (*'rwn 'lhym*).

4.1c battle-chest: Literally, just “chest” or “box.” I translate here as “battle-chest” to signify the fact that the chest’s main function was to represent Yahweh in battle in his manifestation as war god (“Yahweh of Armies”). See notes 8c and 8d below for further discussion of the battle-chest.

Notes to P6

6a on the day that happens: There appear to be two predictions here. The punishment of Eli’s family is not the prediction that will make people’s ears tingle—rather, it is the capture of the battle-chest that will make people’s ears tingle. The day the battle-chest is captured is the day Yahweh will carry out his punishment of Eli’s family (see P8 for these events).

6b he didn’t reproach them: There is an inconsistency in the text here with P2. Either the author is drawing from two independent traditions, or he has forgotten that in P2 Eli did in fact confront his sons and reproach them for their behavior.

6c now and always: This is a favorite phrase of the author, which he always uses in connection with oaths.

6d leading Eli to think: The Hebrew here is ambiguous, but the subject must be Eli. Shmu’el cannot be the subject, as there could have been no doubt in his mind that it was Yahweh. Eli, on the other hand, seems to have felt doubt until he heard what Shmu’el told him. In Hebrew, *’mr* (“say, speak”) is often used to mean “think,” especially when the verb is not followed by the preposition “to.” Hence my translation here.

Note to P7

7a every single one of his oracles to Shmu’el: Hebrew omits “to Shmu’el,” but this is understood by the context and is required in English, though it is not required in Hebrew.

Notes to P8

8a When the army arrived: Here, as in many places in Tanakh (especially the Deuteronomistic History), the Hebrew word *’am* has the meaning “army,” “military forces,” or “fighters” rather than “people.” While I do point out in the notes below a number of other instances where I translate *’am* in this fashion, this usage is so common that I didn’t feel it was necessary to comment on every instance.

8b Why did Yahweh let us be routed: On the construction *ngp* + *l’pny* meaning “cause to be routed by, let be routed by,” see BDB, p. 619, which also references Ju 20.35.

8c battle-chest of the Confederation with Yahweh of Armies: “Confederation” here and elsewhere in this *parashah* (P8) are almost certainly additions by the Deuteronomistic editor. The phrase “Yahweh of Armies, Who Sits Astride the Winged Sphinxes” is the name of the battle-chest, as the passage in P79 makes clear. But with the addition of “confederation” here, it is difficult for the reader to interpret this phrase as the name of the battle-chest, and it morphs into an epithet of Yahweh.

8d who sits astride the winged sphinxes: There is an abundance of evidence that Hebrew *kerubim* are winged sphinxes, which were popular in the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age iconography across the ancient Near East. Thus, it is strange that no translations that I am aware of translate here as I do. Note, in P104, the image is of Yahweh riding (*rkb*) into battle on a winged sphinx (*kerub*). Hebrew *yōšēb* here is

ambiguous, as it is not followed by a preposition. It should arguably be translated here as “enthroned,” although I have taken the liberty of translating it as “sits astride” in order to bring over more fully into English the battle-chest’s association with Yahweh as war god. The sphinx throne was common throughout the Ancient Near East, and was associated with both royal power and military prowess. Thus, sitting on the sphinx throne is a visual metaphor for riding the sphinxes into battle. For a nice depiction of a sphinx throne, see plate 4 of Megiddo ivories (reproduced in this book as the cover illustration and again in figure 4).

8e crying out to one another: This device of anonymous voices talking over one another is a favorite literary technique of Shmu’el’s author to heighten the drama and emotion of a scene. He uses the same technique in the story of Dawid and Goliath (P39,1), and again in Dawid’s return to power after the death of Abshalom (P99,17).

8f We’re in big trouble now: Hebrew *’ōy lanū* (more literally, “woe is us”).

8g his clothing all torn and his head spattered with dirt: The image of an escapee from battle who is covered in dirt and whose clothing is torn is a favorite technique that the Shmu’el author uses to heighten the drama of a scene where bad news is being delivered. He uses this image again in P66, where the messenger reports the death of Sha’ul and Yonathan. He also uses this image in slightly different circumstances in P96, where Hushai the Arkite flees Yerushalem during Abshalom’s rebellion.

9a God’s glory has left Yisra’el: Literally, “glory [or ‘numen’] has left Yisra’el.” Rendering this phrase into natural English requires the addition of “God’s.”

Note to P9

10a to this day: The author is writing several centuries after the events he describes. As discussed in the note 3a above, the principle author of Shmu’el was likely writing sometime in the first half of the 6th century BCE—approximately four hundred years after the time in which these stories are set.

Note to P10

11,3a pay for it with a guilt offering: Hebrew *šub* here is used as a technical term, meaning “pay as recompense.” See BDB, pg. 999, def. 4b, which also cites as examples Ex 21.34, Is 66.15, Dt 32.41,43.

Notes to P11,3

11,3b In accord with...: This long speech given by the priests and diviners shows the influence of the Deuteronomist editor. For more on the Deuteronomistic editor, see note 3a above.

11,3c to their pen: Literally “house” (*byt*). Hebrew *byt* has a wide range of idiomatic usages, including “pen,” as here.

11,3d that harmed us: The construction *naga’ + b* (literally “touch against”) is an idiom for “harm” (BDB, p. 619, def. 3). See for example, 2 Sam 14.19, Jos 9.19, and Gen 26.11.

11,3e shut up: Here I read Hebrew *kalu* as from the root *kl’*, meaning “enclose.”

11,3f They travelled only...: This is a striking sentence in Hebrew that exemplifies the author's mastery of the language and use of details to achieve powerful literary effects. The addition of "mooing as they went" and the image of the Philistine rulers following behind, curious to see what would happen, are beautiful details that would not be seen in any other writer of Hebrew prose. In my opinion, no other author of Tanakh was as effective in using word order and subordinate clauses to overcome the limitations of the language. Such ideas are difficult to express in Hebrew, but seem natural in the hands of this author.

Notes to P11,4

11,4a The Lewites took Yahweh's battle-chest: The *parashah* beginning here is likely an addition by a later hand; alternatively, it may be an example of an independent tradition preserved by our author, who composed a short vignette around it. The Lewites are mentioned in just one other place in Shmu'el—in P96,1, where they flee Yerushalem with Dawid and take the battle-chest with them. Apart from these two instances, all of the priests to Yahweh mentioned in Shmu'el are from the tribes of Ephrayim, Yehudah and Binyamin.

11,4b they returned at once to Eqrone: the Hebrew phrase *bywm hhw* (literally, "on that day") is often used to indicate a more immediate time of action, as here. See BDB, p. 400, def. 7g (though this nuance is not made as explicit there as it should be). See below in P13 for an identical usage of this phrase: "Yahweh at once thundered with a tremendous crash..."

Notes to P11,11

11,11a as far as the large meadow: The Hebrew reads "meadow" here. However, many scholars and translators follow some ancient versions which read "rock" instead of "meadow." Another argument in favor of "rock" is that it natural to use this with the preposition *al* ("upon"), which occurs in the next clause; with meadow, we expect the use of the preposition *b* ("in") instead. The sense of "as far as the large meadow" is that this (approximately) marks the border between the Philistines and the Yisra'elites.

11,11b seventy men fifty thousand men: The Hebrew is garbled here and the text is corrupt. It is possible that these two numbers represent two variant readings which have been conflated in the Masoretic text.

11,11c After asking themselves: The construction of the sentence suggests the author intends to make a parallel with the Philistines' actions earlier, where they convened an assembly, debated the question of what to do about the harm caused by the battle-chest, and then decided to send the battle-chest away. This phrase could also be translated "After deliberating among themselves."

11,11d Whom should he transfer it to...: The verb form is ambiguous. I read the *hiphil*; one could also read the *qal*, in which case the phrase would be translated as "To whom should it go..."

Note to P12

12a From the day: Beginning with this sentence, P12-13 and P15-16,2 are mostly, if not entirely, from the hand of the Deuteronomistic editor (that is, the "editor-in-chief" of the Deuteronomistic History). As these *parashot* introduce one of the main themes of the remainder of Shmu'el ("the sin of kingship"), I believe it is a mistake to view

them as later interpolations. Rather, these *parashot* lay out a key theme that our author then develops over the remainder of his work.

16a Heed the voice of the people: The Deuteronomistic speech here in P16 is odd insofar as it does not recognize the corrupt behavior of Shmu'el's sons.

Note to P16

16,2a they will run in front of his chariot: Our author uses this same image with Abshalom in P94,1.

Notes to P16,2

16,2b and give them to his officials: Literally "slaves" or "servants." A king's officials are often referred to in this manner.

16,2c give them to his senior officers: *sariys* is a foreign word borrowed from Assyria and Babylonia designating a high military official (BDB p. 710); this is preferable to translating "eunuch." See 2 K 25.19, 2 K 18.17, and Jer 39.3,13 for other occurrences in Tanakh where the meaning is "senior officer, high official." This word may be related to the obscure word *šlyš* in the list of heroes in P106, which may also be a foreign word and which appears to have a similar meaning (see note 106b below).

18a in stature: Idiomatic Hebrew. Literally, "from the shoulders and above."

Notes to P18

18b Take one of the servants with you and get going: The language in this *parashah* (P18) is one of many instances where the author of Shmu'el appears to make a special effort to reproduce the language of everyday spoken Hebrew. Some characteristics of the prose in this *parashah* include: the absence of conjunctions where we might expect them, violations of verb-subject agreement, and abbreviated or "short-hand" language that omits information assumed to be known by the speaker's audience.

18c everything he says actually comes true: The servant's speech here is possibly meant to be taken as sarcastic and somewhat humorous. In this interpretation, he would be making fun of seers, most of whom say things that never actually happen. (It was common in ancient Yehudah to criticize the prophets for their inaccurate predictions, as the stories of Yonah and the prophet Yirmayahu demonstrate).

18d quarter-sheqel of silver: It is possible that the author may have intended this to be taken as humorous, as a too small and so inappropriate gift.

18e Your suggestion is a good one: If the "quarter-sheqel" is intended humorously, then Sha'ul here comes across as a bit of an idiot, which would be consistent with the author's antipathy towards him throughout the book.

18f really: Typically, *ky* is translated as "indeed" or "for" or "because." It very frequently is used where in English we might say "really" or "actually." This is especially true in spoken English.

18g they chanced to meet: As is common in Hebrew, our author uses *hnh* (traditionally translated as "behold") here to express the unexpectedness or suddenness of the encounter.

18,1a He will deliver my people from Philishtine control: The author has confused the narrative somewhat. Shmu'el has already delivered Yisra'el from the Philishtines.

Notes to P18,1

See P13, where they are “vanquished.” The language here bears similarities to the Deuteronomistic editor and may be from his hand.

18,1b I have news that will relieve you of all your worries: A nice example of idiomatic Hebrew. “Let me give you news about all that is in your heart” is how it would be translated literally.

18,1c Toward whom...: This is a strange statement that comes out of the blue. Given the abruptness which which Shmu’el changed subject (from the asses to Sha’ul’s selection as king), it is unclear what author had in mind here.

Notes to P18,3

18,3a Dole out the portions: That is, begin distributing the meat to the celebrants. (Shmu’el completed the sacrifice earlier and now the meat from the sacrifice is ready to eat.) The Hebrew of Shmu’el’s speech here is very difficult, possibly because the author’s prose is written in imitation of everyday spoken Hebrew. Or, alternatively, the text may be corrupt.

18,3b Here’s what’s left: Shmu’el is the last person served.

18,3c the invitation: Hebrew *mo’ed*—an appointment or an invitation to an event.

18,3d on the roof: Presumably, the roof of Shmu’el’s house. The main entrance and exit to the house appear to have been from the roof.

Note to P19

19a forgotten: Literally “stopped caring/being concerned about.”

Notes to P19,2

19,2a Qishsson: Sha’ul is the son of Qish. In ancient Hebrew usage, that makes his surname “Qishsson.” Sha’ul here is referred to by his surname—as common in the spoken Hebrew of our author’s times as it is in spoken English today. (See also note 1a.)

19,2b Sha’ul’s uncle: The author introduces this character in an unexpected fashion. Although the author doesn’t name Sha’ul’s uncle here, he almost certainly intended the reader to think it was Ner, who is the father of Abner. For these relationships, see P30.

Notes to P21

21a in front of Yahweh: That is, in front of his temple there in Mitspah.

21b companies: Literally, “thousands.” The word *’lp* (“thousand”) is sometimes used to describe a large collection of people belonging to a family or a company of soldiers. See BDB, p 49, def. 2.

21c he was nowhere to be seen: Literally, “he couldn’t be found.” I have translated into idiomatic English here to reflect the idiomatic Hebrew used throughout this *parashah*.

21d Has a man come here yet?: Note the parallel with Shmu’el’s selection of Dawid in P34-P35—in both cases, the one chosen is absent.

Notes to P21,2

21,2a placed it before Yahweh: That is, placed the scroll in a secure place in the temple. (On important documents being kept in temples, see the “discovery” of the scroll of Mosheh at the beginning of the Yoshiyahu’s reforms in 2 Kings 22.)

21,2b ... plotting something: For another use of the hiphil of the root *hrš* as “plotting,” see P51,10, where Sha’ul is “maliciously plotting” against Dawid.

22a Nahash the Ammonite: A fragment of the Shmu’el scroll from Qumran (4QSama) preserves additional text that many scholars believe was original but that dropped out of the texts on which the Masoretic manuscripts are based (see fragment B-368589, which can be viewed at the Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library website at <https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/image/B-368589>). The text reads: “Nahash king of the Ammonites had been brutally oppressing the Gadites and the Re’ubenites—he would gouge out every man’s right eye and wouldn’t allow Yisra’el to ransom them. As a result, there wasn’t a single man on the other side of the Yarden whose right eye the Ammonite king Nahash hadn’t gouged out. However, there were seven thousand men who had escaped from the Ammonites and come to Yabesh-Gil’ad. About a month later. . .” However, I am not convinced that this fragment was part of the original composition of Shmu’el. For the case against taking this as original, see Alexander Rofe, “The Acts of Nahash According to 4QSam^a,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 32 (1982), 129-133.

Notes to P22

22b God’s spirit: Hebrew *rwḥ ʾllym* (a “breath/wind of god”). Here and elsewhere in the Book of Shmu’el, this term is always used to describe a supernatural inspiration or force from Yahweh that inhabits an individual. These spirits or forces can be “good” (as here) or “bad” (as later in P36 when Dawid plays the lyre for Sha’ul to alleviate the ill effects of the bad spirit inhabiting Sha’ul).

22c then sent word to Nahash the Ammonite: Literally, “said.” The situation implies that they spoke/sent word to Nahash. The elision of the clause is a little unusual but not unnatural in Hebrew. Normal English usage requires referring back to the recipient of the message, and so I have added the reference to Nahash.

23a against me: Literally, “in my hand.” This is a specialized idiom used in legal contexts.

Note to P23

24a who worked with: This construction *ʾsh + ʾt* meaning “work with” is rare, but is also found in Ruth 2.19. See the comment in BDB, p. 794, def. I.1b.

Notes to P24

24b pay close attention while I justify: Literally, “station yourselves” or “take your places.” This idiomatic usage of *yšb* occurs in a few other places, including Ex 14 and 2 Chr 20. See BDB, p. 426, especially def. b. The usage of *špṭ* here (which I translate as “justify”) is as a technical legal term meaning “defend,” “argue a case on behalf of.” The image is of Shmu’el serving as Yahweh’s defense attorney.

24c against both you and your ancestors: “ancestors” here is likely a mistake by our author (or a later editor) for “sons” or “children.”

24,1a right then: Literally, “on that day.” See note 11h above.

Notes to P24,1

24,1b entirely at fault: This nuance is implied by the use of *kōl* with *ra’ah*.

24,1c under any circumstances: Hebrew *ʾak* (“however”).

24,1d Don't turn to follow after worthless things: The use of the particle *ky* to express "consecution" is somewhat unusual, but the Hebrew is perfectly intelligible. See BDB, p. 472-473, def. 1f for this usage. Literally, "Do not turn [from Yahweh] that [you would follow] after worthless things...".

Notes to P25

25a was years old: The number indicating Sha'ul's age has been lost from the text.

25b Yisra'elite forces... foot soldiers: Hebrew *'am* in both instances. Almost always translated as "people," but very frequently used to refer to collections of irregular fighters or non-professional soldiers, nearly equivalent to our "militia." In particular, the Deuteronomist author/editor frequently uses of *'am* to mean "army" or "organized group of fighters." It is used this way throughout Yehoshu'a and Judges, and is a fundamental part of the Deuteronomist's theology of taking possession of the land (Yahweh's *naḥalah*). See also note 8a above.

25c I thought: Literally "said" (*'mr*). Frequently when *'mr* is used alone without a preposition "to" or indication of an audience, the meaning is "said to oneself" or "thought". See note 6d above for another noteworthy instance of this usage.

Note to P25,1

25,1a you didn't carry out your duties: The Hebrew word *šmr* is frequently used in this sense by the Deuteronomist (see BDB p. 1037, def. 3c, which cites Deut 4.6 and 7.12).

Notes to P25,2

25,2a Straight away: Translation of וַיָּקֵם. *Wayyaqam* is commonly used to begin sentences. The literal meaning is "and he stood," but the construction is typically used to indicate some sort of immediate action. Throughout my translation, I have consistently brought this over into English as "right away," "straightaway," or "immediately."

25,2b At the same time, the rest of the garrison...: In the Masoretic text, this sentence appears at the end of the following paragraph. While the narrative flow in Hebrew is a little awkward, it doesn't come across as unnatural. English usage, by contrast, requires a more logical sentence order. As a result, I have shifted the location of this sentence to produce a more natural narrative flow in English.

Notes to P25,4

25,4a his equipment-bearer: Hebrew *na'ar*. Literally, "young man," but used commonly to mean "retainer" or "servant" without regard to age. In some instances, *na'ar* is used to describe an individual of relatively high status; for example, Tsiba, who was Sha'ul's chief steward and who was a very wealthy man, is referred to as *na'ar* by Dawid (see P82,2 and P96,4). See also the discussion in note 2a.

25,4b including Yahweh's priest in Shiloh, the ephod-bearer...: This sentence is awkward in Hebrew, but the text does not appear to be corrupt. The author uses this scene to introduce Ahiyah (in a somewhat clumsy fashion), as he is crucial to the action later in this *parashah*. It is worth noting that the presence of Ahiyah here (who is the nephew of Phinhas Elisson's son Ikabod) is in contradiction to the holy man's speech to Eli in P3 (which is from the hand of the Deuteronomist), in which he claimed Eli's descendants would be banished from the priesthood and would go begging. Also noteworthy here is the reinforcement of the connection between Sha'ul

and the priesthood of Shiloh; the actual history is lost to us, but the tradition reflected here seems to indicate that the priesthood at Shiloh was closely allied to Sha'ul and was a key part of his power base.

25,4c cousin of Phinhas Elisson's son Ikabod: Hebrew "brother" (*'ah*) is often used to mean "relative" or "(close) blood relation." Here the text says that Ahiyah is a "relative" (*'ah*) of Ikabod. "Relative" in this instance likely means cousin. (This is the same Ikabod whose birth story is told at the end of P9.)

25,4d One juttet up from the north: The text here is difficult and may be corrupt. Hebrew *mšwq* is from the root *šwq* "pour, melt" and is typically used to describe molten objects, including pillars. If the text is not corrupt, our author has applied this imagery to a jutting rock. I have tried to capture the imagery with the phrase "juttet up."

25,5a dickheads: Literally "uncircumcised men" (*'rlym*). This word is commonly used in ancient Hebrew as an ethnic slur and is almost always meant by the speaker to be disrespectful and/or offensive.

Note to P25,5

26a Then Yonathan attacked: This clause is absent from the Hebrew. English usage demands a statement of action here, whereas such a statement is not required in Hebrew. Rather, it is natural in Hebrew to require the reader/audience to imply the action from the context.

Notes to P26

26b across roughly half the Philishtine work-site: Many translators believe the text here is corrupt and emend to read *m'nh* (camp) in place of *m'nh* (place of work or toil, or "work-site"). Although "work-site" is a rare word, that is not a good reason to emend the text here. The author in this passage distinguishes between the larger "camp" and the "garrison" (a group of temporary defensive structures located within the camp); there is no reason to suppose that the camp would not also contain some site for specialized types of work (the "work-site" in our passage).

27a God's battle-chest at that time was with the Yisra'elites: The text here is slightly corrupt; the Hebrew here reads "and," which I have emended to "with."

Note to P27

28a Take your hand away!: Apparently Sha'ul had intended Ahiyah to get an oracle from Yahweh about what to do regarding Yonathan's absence. When he realized he had an immediate opportunity to attack the Philishtines, he told Ahiyah to stop.

Notes to P28

28b one man's sword against another: The author is using metaphorical language here; recall the statement in P25,3 that only Sha'ul and Yonathan were armed.

28c the battle spread beyond Beth-Awen: Recall at the beginning of P25 the author tells us that the Philishtine forces were camped at Mikdash, to the east of Beth-Awen.

28d As the Yisra'elites pressed on: In the Masoretic text, the verb here has been vocalized in the passive construction ("were pressed"). I have emended the Masoretic vocalization here to the active voice (either the qal or the piel would be appropriate here).

- Notes to P28,1** **28,1a our victory over the Philishtines hasn't been that great:** The Hebrew is difficult here, but the sense seems to be that the victory wasn't decisive after all, though it might have been if the men had been allowed to eat.
- 28,1b And so Sha'ul built an altar to Yahweh:** This sentence is possibly a gloss added by a later editor to tie the story to an altar that he knew to be associated with Sha'ul. The Hebrew is confusing and somewhat nonsensical, which I carry over in the translation.
- Note to P29,2** **29,2a I admit it:** Literally, "Here I am." The sense of the Hebrew is that Yonathan acknowledges his guilt—"Here I am, guilty as charged."
- Note to P30** **30a Sha'ul's sons were...:** The source used by our author in this *parashah* does not mention—and perhaps did not know of—Sha'ul's son Ish-Ba'al, who assumed the kingship with the help of Abner after the deaths of Sha'ul and Yonathan. See P70.
- Note to P31** **31a Previously:** This nuance is implied by the word order of the Hebrew. By beginning the clause with a word other than a verb, the author expresses a contrast between this clause with the clause that follows: "Previously... and now..."
- Notes to P31,2** **31,2a The Qenite:** The Qenites were the tribe of Mosheh's father-in-law. For his assistance to Yisra'elites after their flight from Egypt, see Num 10.29ff.
- 31,2b executed all his people:** "people" may possibly be used in the military sense, in which case the translation would be "executed all his forces."
- Notes to P32** **32a Karmel:** This is not the Karmel in the north of what was later Yisra'el, familiar from the Eliyahu stories in Kings; rather, this Karmel is a village in the mountainous Yehudean wilderness about 10 miles south of Hebron. See map on page 206.
- 32b went down to Gilgal:** The Hebrew verb *yrd* designates motion from a higher to a lower elevation ("go down, descend") as well as motion from north to south. Here it has the former meaning—Karmel is in a mountainous region of Yehudah, whereas Gilgal is lower in elevation, located near the Yarden river.
- 32c my men had compassion on the best sheep:** Spoils of war are devoted or given to Yahweh by sacrificing, typically by burning on an altar.
- Note to P33,1** **33,1a dove greedily on:** Our author recalls the Yisra'elite rout of the Philishtines in P28,1 by using identical language to what was used there. The Hebrew word is rare (*'yt*), and could also be translated "grasp" if derived from the more common root *'th*.
- Notes to P33,3** **33,3a Obedience is better than making sacrifices:** Shmu'el quotes a proverb that is an implicit criticism of Sha'ul's actions.
- 33,3b Rebelliousness results from errors in divination:** Shmu'el quotes a second proverb, this time criticizing both Sha'ul and his priest Ahiyah. With the proverb, Shmu'el implies that Ahiyah's improper divination produced bad advice, which in turn led Sha'ul into error. It is worth recalling here that Ahiyah is from the clan of Eli, whose descendants Yahweh promised to cast out from the priesthood in P3. The text here seems to be slightly corrupt—the Hebrew has an extra "and" in front of

“teraphim” that I have ignored in the translation in order to preserve the parallelism with the proverb’s first clause.

This verse is the only one in Tanakh that tells us something about how teraphim were consulted for oracles—apparently, one would touch or press or squeeze them. But one had to apply just the right amount of pressure or force—squeeze too hard, and the teraphim give an incorrect oracle. However, when a skilled diviner pressed them the right way, they would elicit Yahweh’s answer to a yes/no question.

33,7a he doesn’t change his mind: At the beginning of P32, the author states that Yahweh did change his mind (*nlhm*, “regret, change one’s mind”) about his decision to make Sha’ul king. The author again states at the end of P33,10 that Yahweh “regretted” (*nlhm*) making Sha’ul king. This inconsistency between the true state of things (that Yahweh can change his mind) and Shmu’el’s own views (that Yahweh doesn’t change his mind) may be a purposeful decision of the author—perhaps to express his own views about a theological problem that was debated at the time he was writing.

Note to P33,7

33,8a death may be bitter, but it is fleeting: The Hebrew here is difficult and the text may be corrupt. I interpret this sentence as a proverbial saying which Agag is quoting to Shmu’el—literally, “The bitterness of death has departed.” I have tried to capture the flavor of the proverb by expressing the thought in a style typical of English-language proverbs.

Note to P33,8

33,9a with his sword: The wording is absent in the Hebrew, but is implied by Shmu’el’s words “Just as your sword bereaved. . .” The reference to Shmu’el’s sword is not required in Hebrew, but English usage demands it explicitly be called out.

Note to P33,9

34a go around lamenting: This is the same word used in P33,10 (*mithabbel*), which I translate there as “sorely disappointed.”

Notes to P34

34b Ah ha!: The Hebrew particle *’ak* is often used to express a sudden insight or realization.

34,1a ‘man sees with the eyes...’: Yahweh is quoting a proverb to Shmu’el. Quoting or alluding to proverbs in a speech was considered a mark of literary sophistication in the author’s day, and is a favorite technique of our author in the dialogues he writes for his characters. Other examples can be found in P33,8, P52 and P91,2.

Notes to P34,1

34,1b bring him: This translation reflects an idiomatic usage of *lqh*. See BDB, p. 543, def. 6.

35a Go on—anooint him: Literally, “get up [*qwm*], anooint him.” Hebrew *qwm* (imperative) is often used to indicate the speaker wants the person he is addressing to take immediate action, similar to how “Go on!” is used in spoken English. (See note 25,2a for related usage of this verb.)

Notes to P35

35b began attacking him: Our author here uses a poetic verb (*b’t*), “assail.” But it is difficult to bring the poetic force of this over into English without marring the translation.

- Note to P36** **36a I know!...**: This speech is an especially interesting example of our author's efforts to represent Hebrew as it was actually spoken. While this speech is easily understood, it is essentially a collection of sentence fragments—not all that different from the style of much spoken English—and many of the grammatical features typical of Hebrew prose, such as the mark of the direct object (*'t*), are absent from this speech.
- Notes to P37** **37a he was six cubits and a span tall**: A cubit (which may have originally signified the length of the forearm) was 12-15 inches. A span (the distance between the thumb and the little finger when the hand is spread) is equal to 6-7 inches, or half a cubit. So, in our author's mind, Golyath was between 7 and 8 feet tall.
- 37b weighing five thousand sheqels**: Our author may be purposefully exaggerating somewhat for effect. A sheqel is approximately 10 grams, meaning Golyath's body armor would have weighed 110 pounds and his spearhead 13 pounds.
- 37c covered his loins**: Literally, "covered his feet." Feet (*rglym*) is used in several instances in Tanakh as a euphemism for genitals, as here.
- 37d Why are you coming out here...**: The tone of Golyath's speech is taunting and disrespectful. The speeches in P37-P40,7 are written in a very lively, colloquial Hebrew, which I have tried to capture in my translation.
- Note to P38** **38a Their names were**: Hebrew reads "The names of his three sons who went to war were." While such repetition is not unusual in Hebrew, it is unnatural and awkward in English, and hence I have omitted the phrase.
- Note to P39,1** **39,1a Golyath the Philistine, from the town of Gath**: Hebrew reads "his name was;" omitted here to produce a more natural English.
- Notes to P40** **40a who does this Philistine dickhead think he is**: The Hebrew word *'rl* (usually translated as "uncircumcised") is almost always used as an ethnic slur, as it is here. See note 25,5a.
- 40b your idiotic plan**: Hebrew *lb* ("heart, mind") often has the meaning of "plan" or "intention," as here. Literally, "bad [or wrong-headed] plan." Eli'ab's tone to Dawid is insulting, which I have tried to capture in the translation here.
- 40c This isn't allowed?**: The Hebrew here appears to be idiomatic and is somewhat difficult to understand. Literally, "Isn't it a thing [that people do]?"
- 40d to face another group**: "Group" is absent in Hebrew, but is implied by the context.
- Note to P40,5** **40,5a After stowing the Philistine's weaponry**: This sentence is not necessarily a later addition, as is commonly supposed; it is equally probable that our author is using material from an independent tradition that was at odds with his main source material. This would explain the jarring reference to Yerushalem (which isn't introduced until much later in the book). The "weaponry" mentioned here are the spoils of victory won by Dawid—Golyath's sword, spear and javelin, and armor.

40,7a as an officer in the military: Literally, “over soldiers.” The lack of title (such as <i>śar</i> or <i>rōš</i>) is perhaps indicative of a position as a middle- or lower-ranking officer.	Notes to P40,7
40,7b that delighted all the people: Could also be translated “that delighted all the soldiers.”	
41,1a in full view of the public: Could also be translated, “at the head of the army.”	Note to P41,1
42,1a Don’t you think it would be a dishonor...: I take the niphil form of <i>qll</i> here to carry the intransitive meaning of the hiphil. Literally, the sentence reads, “Wouldn’t making a marriage alliance with the king seem dishonorable in your eyes, given that I am such a poor and insignificant man?” (The subject of the verb is the phrase “make a marriage alliance with the king.”) A similar use of the niphil form of <i>qll</i> can be found in P79,1, in Dawid’s response to Mikal’s verbal attack on him.	Note to P42,1
43a than any of Sha’ul’s officers: The Hebrew here has <i>’bđm</i> (“servants”). Depending on context, <i>’bđm</i> can have a wide range of meanings; when used in connection to a king, it is often best translated as “officials” or “officers.” See BDB, pp. 713-714, def. 2.	Note to P43
44a with orders to stand guard over him...: I have recast this sentence into smooth English. The literal meaning of the Hebrew is “to stand guard over him and to execute him in the morning.”	Note to P44
44,3a stayed in the nearby pastures: An alternative to “pastures” would be to read “Nayoth” as the name of a village near Ramah. However, given Dawid’s association with shepherding, it seems more likely to me that the author is referring to surrounding fields and pastures.	Note to P44,3
45a Damn it!: The phrase <i>hlylh ly</i> is a very common mild oath in Hebrew expressing a wish that something not happen. The literal sense is something like, “may I become ritually impure if...”. In English, we would say “I’ll be damned if...” or simply “damn it!”	Notes to P45
45b It’s impossible!: Hebrew <i>’yn z’t</i> (“this does not exist”), idiomatic for “no way” or “that’s impossible.”	
45c Dawid strongly disagreed: The Hebrew root <i>šb’</i> usually has the meaning “swear, make an oath,” but sometimes is used with the sense “assert, state in strong terms,” as here.	
45d Just tell me what you really want: Idiomatic Hebrew. Literally “Whatever you yourself tell me, I’ll do.” The translation “really” here captures the force of <i>npšk</i> (“yourself”).	
46a Actually, Dawid excused himself: Hebrew commonly joins the infinitive with the conjugated verb for emphasis. This is often used in situations where an English speaker would say “actually” or “really.”	Notes to P46

46b a pact secured with an oath to Yahweh: The Hebrew here is difficult. Literally, “a Yahweh pact.” By reminding Yehonathan of his obligation to “act with kindness” toward him, Dawid is telling Yehonathan that he is obliged to inform him of what he learns from Sha’ul.

Note to P47

47a Damn you!... If I really did find out: The Hebrew here is informal and somewhat colloquial, and reflects the intimacy between two close friends. Yehonathan’s “damn you” is how he expresses that he takes offense to Dawid’s previous sentence, in which, by reminding Yehonathan of their oath to each other, he subtly questions Yehonathan’s loyalty. The phrase following this imprecation literally reads “Surely I wouldn’t find out that my father has plotted something evil against you and then not tell you about it!” (In other words, “how could you doubt me?”)

Notes to P47,3

47,3a (May Yahweh do likewise for Yehonathan....): This sentence was probably added by a later editor, as it interrupts the flow of Yehonathan’s speech; in addition, it would be somewhat unusual for Yehonathan to refer to himself in the third person like this.

47,3b if this evil plan against you pleases my father: BDB, p. 406 suggests emending the hiphil form of *yṭb* to the qal. However, I prefer to retain the hiphil with transitive meaning. I take the subject as “evil plan”—although rare, it does happen on occasion in Hebrew that the speaker will use the mark of the direct object *t* to introduce or emphasize the subject of the verb. See the discussion in GKC 117i on this. The unusual usage of the mark of the direct object here could also be an example of our author imitating spoken Hebrew, which—like all spoken language—does not observe strict grammatical rules.

47,3c May Yahweh be with you just as he was with my father: Possibly an addition by the same editor who added the sentence above, although here the sentence doesn’t feel all that incongruous with Yonathan’s speech.

47,3d If I do not do so....: That is, “if I do not tell you personally.” The Hebrew here is awkward and difficult, and the text may be corrupt.

47,3e (as we swore before Yahweh): The author uses the phrase “hesed Yahweh”; the word “Yahweh” here may be a later addition, as the sentence would read less awkwardly without it. I have tried to respect the sense of the text with the parenthetical comment.

47,3f and may Yahweh remove each and every....: The Hebrew here is difficult and confusing, and the text may be corrupt. I have chosen to read *lā* (“if only,” “I hope that,” “may”) in place of the negative particle *lō*. (The words differ only in their vocalization.)

47,3g And if Yehonathan does break with Dawid’s family....: This sentence may be a later addition, possibly by the same editor who made other changes to this speech of Yehonathan, as discussed above.

47,3h with every fiber of his being: This phrase (Hebrew *'hbt npšw*), which occurs only once in Tanakh, appears to be a Hebrew idiom; a literal translation would be “with the love of his very own self.”

47,4a and then come back quickly: Hebrew *mō'd* is a noun or adverb meaning, “force, abundance” or “very, exceedingly.” Here the context demands “quickly.” This may be an example of spoken, idiomatic Hebrew, or it may be that the text is corrupt.

Notes to P47,4

47,4b on the day of that incident: The reference is to the instance in P43 where Dawid hid in the field while Yonathan tried to ascertain Sha'ul's intentions toward him.

47,4c the worn-down rock: Many commentators here emend the text to say “this rock” (recall Yonathan and Dawid are speaking out in the field). I have retained the Masoretic text, and taken *'zl* as an adjectival form of the verb with the same root, which has the meaning “be gone, be exhausted, be used up.” See BDB, p. 23.

47,4d may Yahweh keep it forever just between us: The verb is missing from the Hebrew, but is supplied by the context.

48a Why didn't Yishai'sson come to table: Dawid is the son of Yishai. In classical Hebrew usage, that makes his surname “Yishai'sson.” Sha'ul here refers to Dawid by his surname—as common in the spoken Hebrew of our author's times as it is in spoken English today. (See also notes 1a and 19,2a.)

Note to P48

48,1a You double-crossing bastard!: The meaning of the phrase is clear from context, but the precise root of the Hebrew word is unclear. In agreement with BDB, I take *n'wt* to be from the root *'wh* (“bend, twist, pervert”), which is related to *'wt* (“be bent, be crooked”). Literally the Hebrew reads “son of a perverted woman of rebellion” (i.e. in colloquial English, “son of a rebellious slut”). This entire speech of Sha'ul's (see note 48,1c below for the rest of his speech) contains, in my opinion, the most obscene and offensive language in the entire Tanakh.

Notes to P48,1

48,1b you're siding with Yishai'sson: That is, you're choosing Dawid over me.

48,1c that cunt your mother!: The Hebrew *'rwh*, usually translated “nakedness,” is the common word for the genitalia of both sexes, though it is more commonly used in connection with the female genitalia. In several places in Tanakh, however, the word is used by the speaker in a way that is clearly calculated to offend or shock (see for example, Ez 16.37,38 and Ez 23.10,29 and Nah 3.5). Hence my translation here.

48,5a near the south side of the rock: The Hebrew here is awkward. I have added “of the rock,” which is missing from the Hebrew but is implied by the context. Most translators prefer, however, to follow the Septuagint, which reads “from the side of the mound.” But the Hebrew text is perfectly understandable, and there is no reason to suppose the Greek translation reflects a more original text.

Notes to P48,5

48,5b May Yahweh keep you and me united: Idiomatic usage of the Hebrew *byn* (“between”)—“may Yahweh be between me and between you” (i.e. “may Yahweh be the only thing separating us”). The same phrase is used idiomatically with a slightly different sense earlier in this *parashah*—“May Yahweh keep it between us.”

- Note to P49** **49a assuming the serving-lads have managed. . . :** Ahimelek's tone here is ambiguous in Hebrew. It could be read as serious, or as joking banter. While I lean toward the serious reading, the idea that his mention of the "serving-lads" is banter is worth considering. Given that our author emphasized how fearful Ahimelek was of Dawid, it is easy to imagine Ahimelek trying to lighten the mood by bantering with Dawid and making a joke about the temple's male servants having a hard time keeping their hands off the temple's serving women. (For sexual relations between male and female temple servants, see P2,1, where Eli confronts his sons over this practice at Yahweh's temple in Shiloh.)
- Notes to P50** **50a Yes, in the past we kept ourselves from women. . . :** Again, the tone of the Hebrew here in Dawid's speech is somewhat ambiguous. Most likely, he is speaking seriously, although the first part of his speech (about keeping from women when out on a campaign) could possibly be read as sarcastic banter with Ahimelek.
- 50b having been replaced with:** Literally, "in order to replace it with."
- Notes to P50,3** **50,3a Do I lack for crazy people. . . :** The author intends Dawid's scene with Akish and Akish's speech here to be humorous.
- 50,3b join my retinue:** Literally, "come into my household."
- Notes to P51,2** **51,2a his spear in his hand, and all his men standing around him:** The Hebrew reads *'bdym* ("servants"), which I have translated as "men" in most places in this *parashah*. They are his officials, and "servants" implies too lowly of a status in English. See note 43a.
- 51,2b Not one of you was so concerned enough for me:** The Hebrew here is a difficult—*hlh* ("be sick"). Literally, "was sick on my account." This is an idiomatic or colloquial usage; in this situation, English-speakers today would say "worried" or "concerned."
- Note to P51,3** **51,3a Yishai's son:** Throughout this *parashah*, speakers refer to Dawid by his surname, "Yishai's son." As pointed out above in notes 19,2a and 48a, this use of the surname was quite common in both spoken and written classical Hebrew.
- Note to P51,4** **51,4a Listen closely, Ahitub's son:** Sha'ul's tone is curt, despite the use of the particle *na'*, which typically is used to soften a request ("please," "I beg you," "excuse me").
- Note to P51,6** **51,6a whose name was Ebyathar:** Ebyathar later becomes Dawid's chief priest. See P62,4 (with Dawid in the wilderness) and P96,1, P96,3 and P101,1 (in Yerushalem). In the traditions preserved in Shmu'el, Dawid seems to have shown strong favoritism toward the priesthood at Nob; it is noteworthy that all senior priests in Yahweh's cult in Yerushalem during Dawid's kingship are from the priestly clan of Ahitub at Nob. See pages 193-194 below for the full list.
- Notes to P51,7** **51,7a in addition:** Alternatively, this could be translated as "moreover," "even worse," or "compounding the problem." This nuance is implied by the Hebrew word order.

517b Dawid sought an oracle from Yahweh: The author almost certainly understood—though he left it unexpressed—that Ebyathar was the priestly intermediary who sought the oracle for Dawid.

51,8a it'll be even worse: Hebrew *'ap* (literally “how much more so”). It is possible to translate this more formally with the subjunctive: “It would be even worse if we went...”. But the Hebrew here is colloquial and is intended to represent spoken language. Consequently, I have carried it over into colloquial English.

Note to P51,8

51,10a when Ebyathar Ahimeleksson fled to Qe'ilah: The author may be confused here. Earlier in this *parashah*, when Ebyathar joins up with Dawid, Dawid is still stationed in Yehudah in Hareth Woods, not in Qe'ilah. Alternatively, this sentence may reflect a separate tradition or story about Ebyathar that our author has preserved here.

**Notes to
P51,10**

51,10b God has abandoned him, and put him right into my hands: The Hebrew idiom here is pregnant with meaning and difficult to capture succinctly in English—literally, “God has alienated him into my hands.”

51,10c Indeed, the doors are barred...: The Hebrew here is colloquial, and somewhat ungrammatical, like much everyday spoken language.

51,12a “Yes he will come,” Yahweh replied: Dawid asks two questions, but Yahweh only answers one of them, likely because the ephod could only answer one yes/no question at a time. Consequently Dawid has to repeat his other question about whether Qe'ilah's leaders will hand him over to Sha'ul.

Note to P51,12

51,15a made a pact, calling Yahweh as witness: Literally, “made a pact in Yahweh's presence.” This type of pact is identical to the *beriyt Yahweh* that Yonathan and Dawid made, as mentioned in P46.

Note to P51,15

51,16a Who has actually seen him there? I've been told...: The Hebrew here is very colloquial and not entirely grammatical. Another example of our author representing everyday speech.

**Notes to
P51,16**

51,16b Yeshimon wasteland: Hebrew *yšymwn* with the definite article, as here, is the name of a desolate area or wasteland near the Dead Sea (see BDB, p. 445).

51,16c When this was reported...In turn, when Sha'ul learned...: The author represents the cat-and-mouse game between Dawid and Sha'ul by using language that highlights that back-and-forth nature of the action. I have tried to capture this with the “when Dawid...when Sha'ul...” construction.

51,18a With those words, Dawid cut off his men: Hebrew *šs'* (cut down) is usually used to refer to violent physical actions, but here the author makes clear that this was a verbal, not physical rebuke.

Note to P51,18

- Notes to P51,20** **51,20a Why do you listen to people's words:** This lengthy speech of Dawid is the final and climactic interaction between Dawid and Sha'ul. The speech is especially impactful to the reader because the author seems to make a special effort here to represent spoken Hebrew.
- 51,20b After a single field-mouse!:** *par'os*, which appears only here and in P55, is usually translated "flea." However, given that the predator is a hawk, context requires that the prey be some small animal—a field mouse or the like, and not a flea.
- Notes to P52** **52a 'if a man happens upon his enemy...':** It is a mark of sophistication and intelligence to quote a proverb when making a persuasive speech, as here. Just as Dawid seeks to win Sha'ul's assent and respect by quoting a proverb to him, so Sha'ul reciprocates and quotes a proverb back at Dawid. See note 34,1a for other examples by our author.
- 52b So may Yahweh reward you with success...:** The word order used in the sentence is representative of a very informal and colloquial (i.e. spoken) Hebrew.
- 52c you won't destroy my clan's memorial to me:** Literally, "you won't destroy my memorial from my clan." Sha'ul's clan would have honored his memory by erecting a stone memorial (i.e. a stele) in his honor. See the story of Abshalom in P99, where he erects his own memorial because he has no children to do it on his behalf. For *šem* with the meaning of "memorial, monument," see Is 55.13 and Is 56.8. The story in P101,3-P101,4, which is from the hand of a later author, gives the scene here added poignancy: the tradition preserved there is that Dawid does not honor his oath to Sha'ul, but rather wipes out nearly all of Sha'ul's remaining descendants, sparing only Mephiba'al Yehonathansson.
- Notes to P53** **53a whose main business was in Karmel:** See note 32a for Karmel's location in southern Yehudah; see also the map on page 207.
- 53b a real Kalebbite:** The Kalebbites were a clan that lived in southern Yehudah (in Jos 14 and 21, they are associated with the town of Hebron, which is approximately 8 miles north of Karmel). The author here seems to allude to the reputation of Kalebbites for being difficult and obnoxious—much as we today might describe a difficult person from New York city, and then qualify that by adding, "a real New Yorker."
- 53c As it is with myself:** See BDB, p. 312—Hebrew *lly*.
- 53d whatever you can:** Literally, "whatever is available." This is the same construction as in P49, when Dawid asks Ahimelek to give him whatever he has at hand.
- 53e five se'ahs of roasted barley:** One se'ah is equivalent to roughly three gallons. Fifteen gallons (five se'ahs) is equivalent to roughly two bushels.
- 53f So there she was...:** The author has written the scene with special immediacy in order to heighten the drama.

53g this son-of-a-bitch: The usage of *zeh* ("this man") here is highly pejorative, which I have reflected in my translation (playing on the author's characterization of Nabal at the beginning of this *parashah*). See note 87j for an example of the pejorative use of the feminine form of "this."

53h pissing himself against a wall: Hebrew *mštyñ bqyr*. This idiomatic phrase occurs several times in Tanakh, always with reference to exterminating an entire family. My translation repoints *mštyñ* as the hitpa'el (indicating reflexive action) participle form of the root *šyn* "to urinate." The image is of the last remaining man, cowering in fear against a wall and urinating on himself just before his attacker kills him.

53i threw herself: Literally, "fall" (*npl*). The qal form is usually intransitive, but here the author uses the qal form colloquially as the reflexive.

53j I beg you lord – I...– this wrongdoing...: The author represents Abigail's speech realistically—she stumbles for words initially, terrified by Dawid and his men (all of whom are armed with swords). But then she regains her composure and makes an eloquent plea, expressed in very formal language, asking Dawid to show compassion.

53k 'Fool' is his name: One of the numerous meanings of *nabal* in Hebrew is "fool."

53l shedding blood to get your way: *hwšy' yd* (here translated as "to get your way") is a Hebrew idiom that appears a number of times in Tanakh. It has the meaning "gain victory, win victory."

53m your maidservant's presumptuousness: "Presumptuousness" here translates *pš'* ("transgression")—i.e. transgression of class boundaries by presuming to plead in this way to Dawid.

53n you've never been found guilty: Hebrew *mš' + b* (see BDB, p. 593). The use of *mš' + b* ("find against") here has its source in legal terminology.

53o kept safe inside the 'pouch of life': The Hebrew phrase here (literally, "be wrapped securely in the pouch of the living") is unusual and is likely an idiom. The image is of a protective pouch or purse where Yahweh keeps safe those whom he wishes to preserve alive, similar to a purse or bag where a person keeps his money secure.

53p don't let this plan of yours today...: Abigail's speech here is very formal, and somewhat convoluted and periphrastic, as she tries not to offend Dawid. Her point here is that if Dawid sheds blood without adequate cause today, it is something that will cause him pangs of conscience later in life when Yahweh has made him king of Yisra'el.

53,1a and said to her, "Travel safely...": Hebrew word order indicates Dawid bids Abigail farewell at the same time that he receives her gifts; however, in English it is more natural to express these as consecutive rather than simultaneous actions.

Notes to P53,1

53,1b and have done as you asked: Hebrew “lift up your face”; this is a common idiom meaning “shown you favor,” or (as here) “granted your request.” See BDB, p. 670, def. 1b(3) for examples.

Notes to P55

55a What crime have I committed: This construction *mh bydy r’h* (literally, “what wrong-doing is in my hand?” or “what wrong-doing is in my possession?”) is specialized legal terminology used to assert one’s innocence. Shmu’el uses the same terminology in his speech to Yisra’el in P23. See note 23a above, and see BDB, p. 390, def. 5c(1).

55b banished me from claiming my share in Yahweh’s chosen land: “Claiming my share” for *histape’al* (literally, “joining myself with”). The Deuteronomist’s concept of Yahweh’s “chosen land” or “inheritance” is somewhat surprising to find in this speech. This sentence may have been added by the Deuteronomist editor.

55c a single field-mouse: See note 51,20b.

Note to P56

56a because you really did treat me fairly...: The verb tense in both clauses is ambiguous—this is possibly a result of the author attempting to imitate spoken Hebrew, where there is more fluidity in how verb tenses are used. I have translated as past imperfect, followed by future, as I believe this gives the best meaning in the context. However, other translations here are equally possible (e.g. present + future, or past imperfect + perfect).

Note to P57

57a went to join up with: Given the long-standing hostilities between the Philistines and Sha’ul, the verb *br* here (literally, “cross over”) almost has the sense of “defect”—a nuance that I have tried to capture by translating as “join up with.”

Notes to P58

58a one year and four months: The author here expresses “one year” in a colloquial way—*yōmiym* (“days”). While this construction does occur elsewhere in classical Hebrew, it is somewhat unusual.

58b You can’t possibly have gone raiding today: Akish and Dawid are engaging in friendly male banter; see P49-P50 for another possible instance where our author writes a dialogue with male banter. On the rare and unusual usage of the Hebrew particle *’al* (“let not”) in this passage, see GKC 109e. Our author here is almost certainly reproducing spoken Hebrew, which is why the usage is so unfamiliar to our eyes. Most scholars emend the text here to read *’an* (“where”); but there is no reason to do this, as it produces a duller, less interesting dialogue.

58c For the entire time Dawid lived in the Philistine countryside: This clause appears at the end of the sentence in Hebrew, but English usage requires it begin the sentence.

58d thinking to himself: Another instance of *’mr* meaning “think.” The instance here is noteworthy because of the presence of the infinitive construction *lē’mōr*, which is usually used to introduce a direct quote and which is often left untranslated.

- 59a You do understand...right?:** The construction of the verb here (infinitive + imperfect) is always for emphasis. Dawid's response shows that this sentence must be taken as a question, despite the lack of the interrogative particle. **Note to P59**
- 60a completely lost his nerve:** Hebrew *lb*, usually translated as "heart," can also mean spirit, willpower, or motivation. Thus, literally, "his will trembled quite a bit"; *hṛd lb* seems to be an idiom for "lost his nerve," although this is the only occurrence in Tanakh. **Notes to P60**
- 60b neither through dreams...:** Sha'ul tries every means at his disposal to get an oracle from Yahweh—dreams, the Urim, and consulting his prophets. None of these three methods worked.
- 60c divine beings:** Literally, "gods."
- 60,1a won't answer me anymore:** That is, won't answer my requests for an oracle. **Note to P60,1**
- 60,2a has abandoned you and is now avoiding you!:** For *'rk*, BDB proposes "your enemy" (p. 786). However, the context suggests taking this word from the Arabic root *'yr* ("slip away, escape"). See BDB, p. 746 for this root, though there is certainly the possibility that the text may be corrupt. Note, however, the parallelism with Sha'ul's speech immediately preceding ("abandoned me and won't answer"). The parallelism suggests that "avoiding you, giving you the slip," here refers to slipping away from the oracle questions—i.e. the answer slips out of the inquirer's grasp. This could also be translated "and evades your oracles" to make this sense more explicit. **Note to P60,2**
- 61a from the day he and his men defected:** Hebrew *npl* ("fall") is frequently used idiomatically with the meaning "defect, desert, go over to" (see BDB, p. 657). English has a similar idiom—"fall in with." The explicit reference to defection here supports the reading proposed in note 57a above. **Note to P61**
- 62,2a Really, I ask you, what have I done?:** Dawid cleverly evades the issue of whether he has been loyal to Akish (recall his actions in P58) by asking Akish if he has ever found fault in him. **Note to P62,2**
- 62,3a Abigail Nabal of Karmel's wife:** Our author consistently uses the term "Nabal of Karmel's wife" as Abigail's surname. The only exception to this is in P57, when he uses the surname "Nabal's wife of Karmel." (Surnames in classical Hebrew were typically either patronymics or gentilics, but on occasion—as here—were based on marriage relationships.) **Note to P62,3**
- 62,4a in the plains:** When Hebrew *śdh* refers to uncultivated land, as here, it is best translated "plains" rather than "fields." **Note to P62,4**
- 62,6a Because they didn't come with us:** Literally, "because they didn't come with me." Hebrew use of pronouns is more fluid than English, and the shifting between first and third person is not especially unusual. **Note to P62,6**

- Note to P62,7** **62,7a Remember what. . . :** Although “remember” is missing from the Hebrew, it is implied by the context. The sentence structure is accordingly somewhat awkward, but not enough to suppose the text is corrupt.
- Notes to P63** **63a as a sign of his friendship:** Literally, “as his friend.” That is, he sent the gift to the elders, treating them “as his friend.”
- 63b He also sent gifts:** I have added the phrase “he also sent gifts” to create a natural flow in English. The Masoretic text here is in the form of a list; like the lists in P11,5-P11,10 and P106,7-P106,37, the Aleppo Codex separates each item in this list from that which follows with a *parashah setumah*.
- Note to P65** **65a under the tamarisk tree in Yabesh:** Sha’ul has an association with the tamarisk tree. See P51,2, where our author tells us that Sha’ul was “living in Gib’ah under the tamarisk tree up on the heights.”
- Notes to P66** **66a his clothes were all torn. . . :** The imagery here is identical to the image in P8 (see note 8g above), where a messenger comes to report the capture of Yahweh’s battle-chest and the death of Phinhas and Hophni.
- 66b there’s hardly any life left in me:** The wording of the Hebrew phrase—*kl ‘wd npšy by* (literally, “wholly still (some of) my life (remains) in me”)—is very unusual, but appears to be a common idiom. See Job 27.3 for a similar use of this idiom (but with “breath” rather than “life”).
- Notes to P68** **68a teach the Yehudeans about warfare:** Literally, “teach the Yehudeans about the bow.”
- 68b lest the heathen bitches celebrate!:** Literally, “lest the daughters of the uncircumcised celebrate.” The author of Shmu’el consistently uses Hebrew *‘rlm* (“uncircumcised”) as an ethnic slur against the Philistines. It has the force of an obscenity or a profanity in Hebrew, hence my translation here. (See also notes 25,5a and 40a above.)
- Note to P69,1** **69,1a have courage and act smartly:** Idiomatic English for idiomatic Hebrew. The literal meaning of the Hebrew is “may your hands be strong so that you become men of ability.” Although Dawid couches his speech in gracious terms, it is actually a demand for loyalty—he points out to the men of Yabesh that they no longer have a king and that the Yehudeans have now declared their loyalty to him by making him their king. The implication is that if they know what is good for them, they will declare their fealty to Dawid. But, as our author relates in the next *parashah* (P70), Dawid does not win over Yabesh-Gil’ad; instead Gil’ad, along with other northern tribes, chooses Ish-Ba’al as their king. (With respect to Yabesh-Gil’ad’s refusal to join with Dawid, recall the story Sha’ul’s burial there in P65, which preserves a tradition about the fierce loyalty of the people of Yabesh to Sha’ul.)
- Notes to P70** **70a Sha’ul’s son Ish-Ba’al:** Could equally well be translated Ish-Ba’al Sha’ulsson. However, it feels more natural in English to remind the reader that the new king is the son of the former king—hence my translation here. The Hebrew reads “Ish-Bosheth” (Man of Shamefulness), which, as is commonly pointed out, is a later emendation for Ish-Ba’al (“Man of Ba’al” or “Devotee of Ba’al”).

70b over the regions of Gil'ad... The enumeration of the regions of Yisra'el may suggest an older tradition that did not know of the "twelve tribes" of Yisra'el. There are only five tribes here. The addition of the other tribes would have come later, perhaps only becoming the dominant tradition due to the influence of the Deuteronomist.

71,1a entertain us by competing in combat: The Hebrew here is pregnant, saying simply "entertain us." But the rest of the clause is implied by the context and is required by English usage.

Notes to P71,1

71,1b take his dagger: Hebrew *hlsh*, usually translated "plunder, what is stripped off." I translate as a synonym for sword or long-knife, which is "slipped out" (*hlš*) from its sheathe. The game they are playing is apparently one in which the goal is to take your opponent's weapon from him.

71,1c Everyone who had come to the spot where Asah-el fell: To heighten the drama of scenes that present or announce a character's death, our author has a fondness for introducing crowds of men standing around, unsure what to do. In addition to the scene here, he employs this device in P85,4, where Dawid's servants are afraid to inform him of the death of his new-born son; in P89, where Dawid's servants observe him as he mourns his children (mistakenly believing they are dead); and in P100,9 with the death of Amasa.

71,1d Measurement Hill: The word for "measurement" here is related to the word for "cubit."

71,1e Will the sword devour till the end of time?: Abner here quotes a proverb, the point of which is that the sword doesn't devour forever—at some point the violence must stop. This is one of many examples where our author has one of his characters quote a proverb when speaking to an antagonist.

71,1f finally arriving at Mahanayim: Recall that Mahanayim is Ish-Ba'al's royal city. As the reference here shows, our author equated Ish-Ba'al's Mahanayim with the Mahanayim located across the Yarden in Gil'ad (see maps on page 206 and 208). However, it is also possible that the historical Mahanayim of Ish-Ba'al was actually located in Binyamin, where Sha'ul's family was from, but that our author knew only of the Mahanayim in Gil'ad.

71,1g they travelled all night: Beth-Lehem and Hebron are separated by fifteen miles of relatively difficult terrain, so it is plausible that a night-time journey might take the entire night.

72a One day Ish-Ba'al said to Abner, "Why did you sleep with my father's concubine?": Hebrew frequently uses pronouns where English usage prefers the proper name or the noun. Here, for example, Hebrew omits Ish-Ba'al ("he said" rather than "Ish-Ba'al said"). "Sleep with" is a translation of *b'* (go, come, approach, arrive, enter), which is frequently used as a euphemism for (initiating) sexual intercourse.

Notes to P72

72b Am I some son-of-a-bitch... Literally, "am I some dog's head." Like "son-of-a-bitch" in English, Hebrew *klb* ("dog") is often used as term of contempt. Abner's speech here is very odd, because he implies that he has gone out of his way to be

kind to Sha'ul's family, yet in P30 it is stated that he is Sha'ul's cousin (and therefore Ish-Ba'al's second cousin).

Note to P72,1 **72,1a may God do the same to Abner—now and always...**: The grammatical structure of Abner's entire speech is disjointed; this is because the grammar corresponds to spoken Hebrew and not written Hebrew.

Note to P72,2 **72,2a there is one thing I am going to ask you:** Hebrew *l'mr* is usually translated as "saying" but in many instances it simply represents the beginning of direct speech (in which case the better translation is simply the open quotation mark), or as here, the beginning of a new idea, when it is best translated as a colon. However, the usage of this construction within direct speech is very unusual. Given the extent to which our author tries to imitate everyday spoken language, the presence of *l'mr* here may indicate that this usage was part of the spoken language.

Notes to P72,3 **72,3a and made him leave:** Here I change the wording slightly to represent English usage. The Hebrew says "and he left," which is not as impactful in English.

72,3b Abner then counseled...: This speech of Abner's is interesting in its representation of spoken Hebrew. Here Abner quotes Yahweh's promise to Dawid with a mix of direct and indirect speech. Such a construction might be out of place in written language, but is quite typical of spoken language.

72,3c everything that Yisra'el and Binyamin wanted in return for their support: The author uses a common Hebrew idiom here, "all that was good/desirable in their eyes."

72,3d granting him safe passage: Literally, "he went safely."

72,3e killing him to avenge the murder of Asah-el...: Literally, "he died for the blood of Asah-el." English here demands a transitive verb, whereas in Hebrew the intransitive is not unusual.

72,3f Yo'ab's head is dripping with his blood: The author uses a vivid Hebrew idiom here—a literal translation would be "blood swirls around his head." Dawid's curse on Yo'ab in this paragraph and again at the end of this *parashah* comes across as jarring and incongruous, as Yo'ab is his most loyal officer, who saves Dawid time and again from his (often self-created) problems. With the exception of the material here, Yo'ab is consistently portrayed in a positive light throughout the Book of Shmu'el. The curses Dawid pronounces here were almost certainly written to provide justification for Shelomoh's execution of Yo'ab in 1 Kings 2. The curse is integral to the *parashah*, which suggests that it was not a later addition, but rather was written by the principal author of Shmu'el, possibly at the direction or request of either the Deuteronomist or the principal author of Kings.

72,3g who hold fast only to the spindle: The author is punning. The verb form here (hiphil of *hzaq*) is usually used in connection with fighting and showing courage. Dawid wishes Yo'ab's descendants to be so timid that the only thing they will "hold fast to" is the spindle—that is, they would rather do women's work than fight.

- 72,6a May Yahweh repay the evildoer...**: Dawid is quoting a proverb here. The context suggests it is a “wish”—hence I have translated in the subjunctive even though the Hebrew is a simple declarative. **Note to P72,6**
- 73a When Ish-Ba'al Sha'ulsson**: The Hebrew uses only the surname “Sha'ulsson” here. I have added “Ish-Ba'al” to produce a more natural English. **Notes to P73**
- 73b the raiding parties for Sha'ulsson**: I have emended the text by inserting the preposition *l* (“for”), which is lacking from the Masoretic text.
- 73,1a They had entered the house...**: The narrative in this paragraph is quite repetitious, and may reflect the author’s attempt to combine two different sources for the story of Ish-Ba'al’s death. The Desert Steppe Road in the following sentence is likely the name of one of the main roads to the south from Ish-Ba'al’s royal city, Mahanayim. **Notes to P73,1**
- 73,1b granted vengeance to our lord the king**: Hebrew reads “my lord.” English usage, however, requires first person plural here.
- 73,1c simply because he gave me the news**: Literally, “simply because the news was given to me by him.” The Hebrew construction here—*qal* infinitive used in the passive sense—is unusual. This is possibly another example of spoken Hebrew.
- 73,1d how could I not seek vengeance**: The author uses the interrogative particle *helō'* here as a way to make a definitive statement. English uses the interrogative phrases “how could I not” / “how would I not” in a similar fashion. For this usage of *helō'* (which is relatively common in Hebrew, and which the author of Shmu'el is especially fond of), see BDB p. 520, def. 4b(β).
- 73,1e taking Ish-Ba'al's head and burying it in Abner's grave**: Recall that Ish-Ba'al is Abner's second cousin (see note 72b). Ancient readers would have understood that by burying Ish-Ba'al's remains with a relative, Dawid was making a point of giving him an honorable burial.
- 74a All the tribes of Yisra'el travelled to Hebron**: Possibly just the five tribes—Gil'ad, Ashur, Yizra'el, Ephrayim, and Binyamin—that comprise Yisra'el in the tradition cited in P70; see note 70b above. **Note to P74**
- 74,1a for the blind and the lame have rejected you**: The Hebrew here is very difficult and the text may be corrupt. The particle *ky 'm* usually has the meaning “except, unless,” but in certain circumstances *ky 'm* has the same meaning as *ky* (“but, for, because, when, indeed”), which is how I have translated it here. For *ky 'm* being used in place of *ky*, see the discussion in BDB p. 475, def. 2b. I have translated the verb here (the hiphil form of *swr*) as “reject,” though this meaning is rare and uncertain. **Notes to P74,1**
- 74,1b harms the lame or the blind with a spear**: The Hebrew here is difficult and the text may be corrupt. The meaning of *šnr* is uncertain. It is usually translated as “pipe,” but context suggests it may refer to some type of weapon. I believe the word is related to the root *šnn* (“thorn, barb, hook”) and so translate it as “spear.”

- 74,1c Yahweh God of Armies:** The insertion of “God” into Yahweh’s name here is highly unusual, as it occurs nowhere else in Shmu’el. Recall that the author of Shmu’el believed Yahweh’s full name to be “Yahweh of Armies”(as indicated in Dawid’s prayer in P81,1 and as discussed above in note 1b.) The idea that Yahweh’s full name was “Yahweh of Armies” (Yahweh Tseba’oth) can also be seen in the books of Yesha’yahu (Isaiah) and Yirmayahu (Jeremiah). In these two books, the phrase “Yahweh of Armies is his name” appears ten times; see BDB p. 839 for citations.
- Note to P76** **76a pillaging and plundering:** This language is absent from the Hebrew, but is implied by the use of the verb *ntš + b* + location with soldiers. See Jud 15.19, where this combination also implies pillaging. See also BDB, p. 644.
- Notes to P77** **77a like an onslaught of water:** The image is of water roaring down a wadi-bed in a flash flood.
- 77b left their gods there:** I.e. the statues of their gods that they carry into battle (not dissimilar to carrying Yahweh’s battle-chest into battle).
- 77c as part of their victory spoils:** Absent in Hebrew, but implied by the context, and required in English usage.
- Note to P78** **78a take action right away:** Or “act decisively.” The verb *hṛṣ* means to “cut, decide.” The idiom is somewhat like English “cut to the chase.”
- Notes to P79** **79a set out for Ba’aley-Yehudah:** Ba’aley-Yehudah is an alternate name for the town of Qiryath-Ye’arim, as Jos 15.9 demonstrates. Recall that in P11,11 the men of Qiryath-Ye’arim placed the battle-chest with Abinadab in the nearby village of Gib’ah, where it stayed until Dawid’s decision to bring it to Yerushalem. For the use of the preposition *min* expressing direction “toward” in certain instances with verbs of motion, see BDB p. 578, def. 2c.
- 79b which is called by the name depicted on it:** The Hebrew is difficult. I believe the preposition *lyw* at the end of the sentence is to be taken with the phrase *nqr’ šm*. This yields the translation: “called by the name [depicted] on it.” The second *šm* is awkward, and if not a mistake, may simply be the first word of the phrase that (our author believed) was written on the battle-chest: “Name: Yahweh of Armies. . .”
- 79c sits astride:** See discussion in note 8d.
- 79d Uzza was sitting with:** The antecedent to “with” is missing from the Hebrew text. The broader context and the mention of Ahyo in the second half of the sentence make it clear that Uzza’s name is the missing antecedent, and I have emended the text accordingly.
- Note to P79,1** **79,1a If I ever embarrass myself:** For the niphal form of *qll* used to represent the reflexive or intransitive meaning of the hiphil (“dishonor, treat with contempt”), see note 42,1a above.
- Note to P80,1** **80,1a Go and speak to my servant Dawid as follows:** The entire oracle is full of formulaic language and imagery associated with the Deuteronomist editor.

80,2a I haven't lived in a house: The Deuteronomistic editor recognizes only the temple in Yerushalem; this sits uneasily with references elsewhere in Shmu'el of temples to Yahweh in Shiloh (P1-8), Nob (P49-50), Mitspah (P20), Hebron (P95) and Gilgal (P22 and P33).

Notes to P80,2

80,2b I constantly gave you respite: This passage is somewhat awkward in Hebrew, as the Deuteronomist editor (who is the author of this speech of Yahweh) frequently jumps back and forth between first person ("I") and third person ("Yahweh").

80,2c lie in the grave with your ancestors: I.e. lie in your family grave.

81a under the tent: Absent In Hebrew, but implied by the context. The language of Dawid's speech that follows has numerous constructions and images typically associated with the Deuteronomist editor.

Notes to P81

81b But now I'm talking like a mere human: More literally, "even though this speech is a human sort of practice". See BDB, p. 436, def. 3 ("manner of a human"). Dawid catches himself as he realizes how ridiculous his words must sound to Yahweh.

81c you have done this tremendous thing by making it known to your servant: Language typical of the Deuteronomistic editor. In my translation, I have retained some of the bombast of the prose style, which unnecessarily piles up phrase upon phrase.

81d you are without peer: More literally, "you are the greatest." The language here is typical of the Deuteronomist.

81e from its peoples and its gods: The Hebrew here is difficult, but it seems better here to take "peoples and its gods" as referring to Egypt than to Yisra'el.

81,1a revealed your promise to your servant: Literally, "opened your servant's ear," which is an idiom for "revealed to." The notion here of a "promise" is implied by the statement that Yahweh will establish a dynasty for Dawid.

Notes to P81,1

81,1b felt an urge in his heart: Idiomatic Hebrew. Literally, "found his heart to pray."

82a their capital city Metheg: This city is not on the list of the five principal Philistine cities in P11 and is mentioned elsewhere in Tanakh or known from other sources. For that reason, many scholars believe the text here is corrupt.

Notes to P82

82b attacked the region around the River Perath...: Translating *yšyb ydw* as "attack." This appears to be an idiomatic Hebrew phrase (literally, "return his hand"), although the construction is not mentioned in BDB (but see p. 999, definitions 4 and 5). The "River Perath" is the Euphrates. The author likely has in mind the region of the Euphrates that flows through the northeastern part of what is modern-day Syria, as this is the part of the Euphrates that is closest to Yisra'el and Yehudah.

82,1a to congratulate him: Literally, "to bless him" or "to wish him well."

Notes to P82,1

82,1b one of To'iy's fiercest adversaries: *'š mlḥmwṭ* is a Hebrew idiom. BDB, p. 536, translates as "frequent," but the superlative is more in keeping with the context. For the partitive genitive used as the superlative (as here), see GKC 133h.

82,1c defeating Aram in the Salt Valley: The Salt Valley is located to the south of the Dead Sea, whereas Aram is located to the northeast of the Yarden River, in what is modern-day Syria. Given the unlikelihood that the Aramean army would be so far from their home region, some commentators emend the text here by changing "Aram" to "Edom."

82,1d oversaw the king's personal guard: The Hebrew here appears to be slightly corrupt. Literally, "and the king's personal guard." I have emended by replacing the *waw* ("and") with the preposition *'al* ("over"). The terms for the king's personal guard (*"kerethi* and *pelethi*") appear to be names of Philistine clans. See BDB, p. 504.

Notes to P82,2

82,2a especially kind: Literally, "divine kindness." Note the similar construction in P41 *ḥesed yahweh*.

82,2b Mephiba'al: Dawid greets Mephiba'al warmly and familiarly, trying to put his fears to rest.

82,2c a worthless creature: Literally, "a dead dog" (an idiomatic Hebrew expression).

82,2d Sha'ul's steward Tsiba: "Steward" here is *na'ar* ("boy, youth"). The usage here shows that this is a professional term, more akin to "chief steward," "majordomo," or "head servant." As the next sentence in the text makes clear, Tsiba is probably in his forties or fifties and has acquired quite a fair amount of wealth.

Notes to P83

83a just as his father Nahash did with me: This is the same Nahash, king of the Ammonites, who fought Sha'ul and Shmu'el (see P22). While in one tradition Nahash has a particularly cruel and vicious nature, the passage here indicates that there was another tradition in which Nahash was an ally of Dawid. In support of the idea of an alliance between Dawid and Nahash, it is interesting to note that Yo'ab, Abiyshai, and Asah-el—three of Dawid's military leaders—may have been the grandsons of this Nahash. In P99, our author notes that Amasa's mother Abigail Nahash's daughter is the sister of Yo'ab's mother Tseruyah. Assuming Abigail and Tseruyah had the same father, and assuming this Nahash is the same Nahash who was king of the Ammonites, this would make him the grandfather of Yo'ab, Abiyshai and Asah-el. (It is also worth noting that the family name our author calls Yo'ab and his brothers by—"Tseruyahsson"—is highly unusual in that it is based on their mother's name, and not their father's name. If the mother had significantly higher status than the father—if she were a princess, for example—this might explain the preference for using her name as the basis for the family name.)

83b to console him on account of his father: "On account of" is a translation of Hebrew *'el*, a rare usage of this preposition.

83c the king of Ma'akah: The Ma'akah here is likely the same town as Beth-Ma'akah mentioned in P100-P101, where the rebel Sheba Bikriysson sought refuge.

84,1a Please know—that woman is...: Literally, “isn’t this woman...” The interrogative *hl’* is often used in place of a declarative sentence when the speaker wishes to be polite. The same usage of *hl’* occurs later in the *parashah* when Dawid speaks to Uriyah. The usage of this interrogative particle in note 73f is slightly different, though related.

Notes to P84,1

84,1b she entered his room: Literally, “she came to him.” The verb *bw’* is often used to connote initiating sexual intercourse (see note 72a above). I have tried to capture this intimate connotation here with the addition of “room.” By making Bath-Sheba the subject of the verb, the author may be implying that she bears some responsibility for what happens. It is worth noting that in this usage of *bw’*, the subject is almost always a man.

84,2a Abimelek Yerubeshetsson: See Judges 9 for this story.

Note to P84,2

84,3a the sword consumes where it will: Dawid quote a proverb (a favorite literary device of our author). The proverb expresses the unpredictability and randomness of death in battle. The phrase *kzh wkzh* is idiomatic speech—literally “as here and as there” or “in one place as in another”.

Note to P84,3

85,2a giving you your lord’s house, and putting his own wives into your bed: This oracle, which is from the Deuteronomist’s hand, appears to mention a tradition in which Dawid occupies Sha’ul’s royal residence in the town of Gib’ah in Binyamin, and takes Sha’ul’s wives as his own. These events are mentioned nowhere else in Shmu’el.

Notes to P85,2

85,2b therefore, the sword will never turn away from your family: With this oracle, Nathan sets in motion the plot of the remainder of the Deuteronomistic History—the tragedy of kingship, and the tragedy of Yahweh’s people.

85,3a and give them to your compatriot: The terminology here (“compatriot”) is identical to the oracle Shmu’el delivered to Sha’ul in P33, when Yahweh told Sha’ul he was taking the kingship away from him and his family.

Note to P85,3

85,5a because you so egregiously reviled Yahweh’s enemies: The Hebrew reads “Yahweh’s enemies” here, which makes no sense. The text should likely be emended here to read simply “Yahweh,” which provides the sense demanded by the context.

Notes to P85,5

85,5b went to the tent-shrine: The phrase “to the shrine” is absent from the Hebrew, but implied by context (Dawid is seeking an oracle). Presumably, the shrine is the tent where Yahweh’s battle-chest is kept.

85,5c he went to Yahweh’s temple: This anachronism appears to be a mistake by the author (or a later editor), who has temporarily forgotten that the temple in Yerushalem had not yet been built. (It seems improbable that our author is using *byt* here to refer to the tent-shrine, as Hebrew *byt* is always used to describe permanent structures, never temporary ones.)

85,5d on account of Yahweh: The construction of the sentence in Hebrew implies that this phrase is a direct quote from Nathan giving the reason for the new name. The phrase is ambiguous—it could mean “because Yahweh told me to call him this,” or “because of Yahweh’s great love for the child.”

Notes to P86

86a had attacked Rabbah: The Hebrew verb *lhm* means “fight with, engage in battle with,” but often has the sense of “attack,” which is how I’ve translated it here.

86b it weighed a talent in gold and in precious stones: With respect to the crown’s weight, the author is either exaggerating for effect or he is confused about the units of measure he is using. A talent was equivalent to 3,000 sheqels. A sheqel weighed roughly 10 grams, meaning that a talent was equivalent to 30 kilograms (or approximately 65 pounds).

Notes to P87

87a Abshalom... Tamar... Amnon: See the end of P71 for the family relationships. Abshalom is Dawid’s third-born son, by his wife Ma’akah Talmay’s daughter. Amnon is Dawid’s first-born son, by his wife Ahino’am of Yizra’el. Tamar is Amnon’s half-sister. In this *parashah*, the author sets in motion the disaster that Nathan predicted in P85—Amnon, Dawid’s first born and heir apparent, will be the first of Dawid’s heirs to die.

87b his half-sister: In Hebrew, *’hw* can mean either “sister” or “half-sister.” Just as *’h* (brother) is sometimes used to mean “cousin” or “nephew” (see BDB p. 26, def. 2), it may be possible that *’hw* here actually means “cousin” or “niece.” Given the closeness of Abshalom’s relationship with Tamar as described in the text, however, it seems most likely she is his full-sister and therefore Amnon’s half-sister.

87c Yonadab Shim’ahsson: Shim’ah is one of Dawid’s elder brothers and the son of Yishai. Shim’ah and his brothers would have been the “elder relatives” who were consoling Dawid when he was praying over his new-born son in P85. Yonadab is thus the first cousin of Abshalom, Tamar, and Amnon.

87d and then fried them up: The Hebrew verb *bšl* is typically translated as “boil,” but can also mean “fry” or “saute” (see, for example 2 Chr 35.13). See BDB, p. 143.

87e Send all the male servants out!: The verb form here is a nice example of the fluidity of the grammar of spoken Hebrew, and of our author’s emphasis on verisimilitude when representing spoken language. The verb is written as the masculine plural imperative, yet because it is a command to Tamar, proper grammar would have required our author to use the feminine singular form of the imperative.

87f As she approached him with the food: Literally, “as she brought [the food] near to him in order to eat.”

87g Don’t force me and humiliate me: Our author uses a single verb here, *’nm*, which has connotations of both force and humiliation and which is elsewhere translated as “rape.”

87h how could I get rid of my shame: The Hebrew reads “where could I get rid of”; however, in translation, “how could I get rid of” produces a more natural English.

87i that other thing you just did to me: Tamar can't bring herself to call the act by name.

87j get this bitch out of my sight: The Hebrew here reads *z'wt* ("this woman"). The refusal to use her name here is extremely insulting and demeaning—hence my translation here. See note 53g for another example of "this" used in a highly pejorative manner.

87k Send her outside: The author uses the male plural imperative form of the verb here, rather than the grammatically correct male singular imperative. See note 87e above.

87l wearing a long-sleeved under-tunic as her outer garment: Not so very different from the present-day fashion.

87m that little shit Amnon: Hebrew "Amiynon." This is a diminutive variant of Amnon's name, and is used in a pejorative fashion. In English, we use the diminutive similarly in a pejorative sense in the terms "little shit," "punk," or "brat." Although Amnon is the older brother, Abshalom is more physically imposing (see P92)—hence Abshalom looks down on him.

87n who did this to you: Abshalom avoids using terms for rape or sexual intercourse in order not to upset Tamar further. The Hebrew here is quite euphemistic: literally, "was little Amnon your brother [the one who was] with you?"

88a summoned all the king's children to the palace: The phrase "to the palace" is absent from the Hebrew, but is implied by context. While it is natural to omit such phrases in Hebrew, that is not the case in English, which requires the writer/speaker to specify the location people are being summoned to if there is any ambiguity.

Notes to P88

88b Not everyone then: The text doesn't explicitly say "everyone," but this is implied by the context. BDB, p. 530, def. 2 suggests emending the Hebrew *lō'* ("not") by repointing to *lū'* ("if only"). The Masoretic text, however, is preferable here, and seems to be another instance of our author striving to depict the language as it was actually spoken.

88c along with all his other children: The translation "along with all his other sons" is equally plausible.

88,1a Be firm: A similar construction with *h̄zq* is used when Yo'ab encourages his brother to fight the Ammonites in P83.

Notes to P88,1

88,1b made a quick escape: Hebrew *wayyaqam*, which indicates immediate action (see note 25e above).

89a stood nearby looking on: A favorite literary device of our author. See note 71c.

Note to P89

- Notes to P89,1** **89,1a Don't let anyone, my lord, accuse...**: The Hebrew here is difficult, and likely reflects the author's attempt to represent spoken language, where grammatical rules are not followed as consistently as in written language. The reference to Abshalom is absent in Hebrew, but is implied by the previous sentence describing the report that Dawid received.
- 89,1b raped his sister Tamar**: The verb here is "humiliate"—the same verb used in the narrative about Amnon's rape of Tamar above (see note 87g above).
- Notes to P90** **90a coming from the opposite direction**: For this usage of *derek*, see BDB p. 203, def. 3.
- 90b Abshalom fled and sought refuge with Talmay Amihudsson... Abshalom fled and sought refuge in...**: Recall that Abshalom is the grandson of Talmay, who is the king of Geshur (see P71,2 for this family relationship). These two sentences are clearly variants of one another. This appears to be another example of our author (or later editors) choosing to retain two alternate versions of certain material rather than selecting just one.
- 90c mourning continually**: "Continually" translates the Hebrew *kl hymym* (literally, "all the days"). For this idiomatic usage of this phrase, see BDB p. 400, def. f.
- 90d Dawid didn't have the energy to go after**: Literally, "Dawid was exhausted to go after." The Hebrew text appears to be corrupt; I have emended *wattekāl* to *wayyekel* (reading third-person qal, not third-person pi'el) in order to get verb-subject agreement and force of meaning. (See BDB p. 477, def 2b.)
- Notes to P90,1** **90,1a Then Yo'ab told her exactly what she should say**: Idiomatic English to translate idiomatic Hebrew. The literal translation of the Hebrew is "Yo'ab put certain words in her mouth."
- 90,1b went to speak to the king**: "Went to" is absent from Hebrew, but demanded by English usage. In Hebrew prose, the author is not always under obligation to transport the characters from one scene to the next, unlike the writing custom of English-speakers.
- Note to P90,2** **90,2a One of them struck the other**: The vocalization of the verb here is very unusual—we expect either *wayyakk* or *wayyakkeh*, but instead the text reads *wayyakkō*. This unusual vocalization, if faithfully preserved by the Masoretes, may represent the author's imitation of the "Theqo'ahite" dialect. (Theqo'ah was a town in southern Yehudah approximately 20 miles south of Yerushalem; see the map on page 208.)
- Note to P91** **91a Any guilt in this case... should be borne by me and by my father's family**: That is, she asks the king to hold her husband's family (and therefore to hold her son) blameless. Her goal is to ensure her husband's name can be perpetuated.

91,2a So why has the king decided this way...: She is pointing out the inconsistency of the Dawid's decisions—that is, why did the king decide not to hold her son accountable for the murder of his brother, but at the same time, he continues to hold Abshalom guilty for the murder of Amnon? The Hebrew here is difficult, and may reflect the author's attempt to represent a "Theqo'ahite" accent.

Notes to P91,2

91,2b water that is poured out...: The woman is citing a proverb here—a favorite technique of our author in speeches where the speaker is either trying to persuade or is making a complaint. Literally, "like water poured out to the ground which can't be put back." See notes 33,3a, 33,3b, 34,1a, 52a, 71,1e, and 72,6a for other examples.

91,2c so as not to banish the outcast unjustly: The nuance "unjustly" is inferred from the context, implied by the characterization of this as an event that once made can't be undone. The language here, like all of the woman's speech, is highly colloquial—here the adverb "so as not" is followed with the imperfect form of the verb rather than the more grammatically correct infinitive.

91,2d Because my relatives frightened me so much: Hebrew *'am* here appears to mean "relatives." It usually has a more general meaning (people, soldiers, retainers), but can be used to refer collectively to any large or medium-sized group. See BDB, p. 766, def. 2 for related usages.

92a is exactly correct: The author uses a common Hebrew idiom here ("there is nothing to the left or the right of..."). The Hebrew word for "there is" is *yēš*; the text, however, reads *'iš*. This is likely another example of our author representing the Theqo'ahite dialect. See note 90,2a above.

Notes to P92

92b this unfortunate situation: "Unfortunate" is absent from Hebrew, but implied by context.

92,3a (for he would only shave at the end of the year...: Literally, "(now it was at the end of the year when he would shave, for his hair was heavy upon him and he needed to shave it)."

Notes to P92,3

92,3b two hundred sheqels: Two hundred sheqels is equivalent to approximately 2,000 grams, or about four and a half pounds. The author may not have had a sound grasp of weights (see note 86b), or he may be exaggerating for effect.

94,1a Abshalom equipped himself with a chariot and horses...: Abshalom's behavior here signals his desire to aggrandize power and overthrow his father. Note especially that 1 Kings 1 tells us that once Adoniyahu proclaimed himself king prior to Dawid's death, he too "equipped himself with a chariot and steeds and a band of fifty men who would run before him".

Note to P94,1

95a On his fortieth birthday: The author has confused the timeline somewhat—or he is relying on conflicting sources. In P74,1, our author states that Dawid became king at age thirty, and ruled for forty years; and in P71,2, our author tells us that Abshalom was born in Hebron, after Dawid became king. So, in our author's mind, Dawid would have been in his early thirties when Abshalom was born. Thus in the

Note to P95

timeline implied by P71,2 and P74,1, Abshalom would have been in his mid- or late thirties at the time of his rebellion.

Notes to P96

96a and that would mean disaster for us: Literally, “he would thrust this terrible thing upon us.”

96b personal guard: The guard may have consisted of Philishtine mercenaries, as the name in Hebrew *hkrty whpfty* (“the *kerethi* and the *pelethi*”) is associated with Philishtine clan names (see note 82,1d).

96c Gittite division: These are soldiers from the Philishtine town of Gath who are serving as mercenaries for Dawid.

Notes to P96,3

96,3a your and Ebyathar’s sons: The use of the second person plural in this sentence (“your [plural] sons” and “word from you [plural]”) indicates that Dawid is addressing Ebyathar as well as Tsadoq; to avoid confusion in English, I have added the explicit reference to Ebyathar here.

96,3b awhile in the desert steppes: Dawid earlier stated his intention to stay in the desert steppe while waiting for news of the rebellion.

96,3c where it was customary for people to prostrate themselves in worship of their gods: The Hebrew in this clause is somewhat ambiguous, and it is possible that Dawid is the subject of the action, in which case the sentence would be translated “When Dawid reached the top of the hill, as he was prostrating himself there in worship to God, he suddenly noticed. . .”.

Notes to P96,4

96,4a your master’s son: Tsiba was originally the servant of Sha’ul (see P82,2); hence Sha’ul was Tsiba’s “master.” Once Sha’ul and Yonathan died, he entered the service of Yonathan’s son Mephiba’al. “Son” can be used to describe any direct male descendant, such as grandson, which is the case here (Mephiba’al is Sha’ul’s grandson).

96,4b whose name was Shim’iy Gera’sson: The entire scene here with Shim’i Gera’sson has a strong comic element. It is worth noting that Shim’iy must have been very powerful within the Binyaminite tribe and within Sha’ul’s family, as is clear from the reference to him in P99,18, when he brings one thousand fellow Binyaminites to meet Dawid at Gilgal on his return to Yerushalem.

96,4c Run away!: The Hebrew verb here is *yš’*, typically with the meaning “go out, come out” in the qal form. However, the qal can also be used to refer to the action of fleeing (see BDB, p. 423, def. 1d), which is how I have interpreted it here. That is, Shim’i is not saying “go away” (i.e. from Bahurim); rather, he is insulting Dawid’s courage by sarcastically telling him to “run away” (i.e. from Yerushalem).

96,4d So, here you are now: Shim’i is saying “Look at your situation, and how far you’ve fallen.”

96,4e son-of-a-bitch: Literally, “dead dog.” A term of contempt in Hebrew. (See also note 72b above.)

- 97a came to Ayephim:** The text is somewhat ambiguous here. I read Ayephim as a place name, as required by context; however, this place is not mentioned elsewhere in Tanakh, and the word could also be read as an adjective (“exhausted”) modifying Dawid and the company of men with him. **Note to P97**
- 98a Come up with a plan:** Abshalom addresses Ahithophel in the second-person plural here—almost certainly an example of our author imitating spoken Hebrew with its relatively loose observance of grammatical rules. **Notes to P98**
- 98b Go have sex with:** Hebrew *bw’*. See comments in notes 72a and 84,1b above.
- 98c in sight of all Yisra’el:** And so Nathan’s oracle in P85,3 is fulfilled: “he will have sex with your wives in public, in broad daylight.”
- 98,1a When they all turn back from the man whom...:** Hebrew lacks “from”; possibly another instance of the author imitating spoken Hebrew. **Note to P98,1**
- 99,2a at risk of being immediately destroyed:** “Immediately” inferred from context; “at risk of being” captures the tone of the Hebrew better than the more literal rendering “could be.” The construction *lmlk* (“to/for the king”) and *lkl h’m* (“to/for all the people”), while not really grammatical, give the language a more formal tone in line with what would be expected from Hushai, a senior advisor to the king. **Notes to P99,2**
- 99,2b Because they couldn’t be seen going into town:** That is, going into Yerushalem, where they would have been recognized.
- 99,2c local official:** Hebrew *na’ar* (“youth, young man”). This term is often used to describe servants, royal retainers or other officials (see note 82,2d above).
- 99,2d Hurrying away quickly:** The author neglects to relate the receipt of the actual news from the maid-servant, as well as Yohonathan’s and Ahima’ats’ realization that they have been recognized. While this is normal for Hebrew prose, the absence of such information makes for an awkward narrative in English.
- 99,4a Dawid arrived at Mahanayim:** In our author’s view, the Mahanayim where Dawid sought refuge is the same Mahanayim that was Ish-Ba’al’s royal city (P70 and P71,1). But see the discussion in note 71,1f. **Notes to P99,4**
- 99,4b Amasa:** Amasa is Yo’ab’s cousin. He may have been born out of wedlock, as he is never called by his family name.
- 99,5a Shobiy Nahashson:** Shobiy probably is the son or grandson to Nahash, the King of the Ammonites, whose viciousness was portrayed in P22. On the friendly relations between Dawid and Nahash, see note 83a above. There seem to have been conflicting traditions about Dawid’s relationship with the Ammonites—one in which they are his allies, and another in which they are hostile toward him. (For the latter, see P83 and 84, where Dawid fights against Nahash’s son and successor, Hanun.) **Note to P99,5**
- 99,7a if a large number of us:** Literally, “half of us” (used idiomatically here). **Note to P99,7**

- Notes to P99,8** **99,8a while he was riding on a mule:** Contrast this with the chariots and horses he rode after his return from exile (P94,1).
- 99,8b Everyone without exception:** Literally “anyone whosoever.” The grammatical construction here is very unusual in Hebrew, but easily understood. Possibly another example of the author representing spoken Hebrew; the corresponding idiomatic phrase in English is “without exception.”
- 99,8c you would have stood off to the side...:** This sentence provides a nice illustration of the dangers of overly literal translations. It reads perfectly fine in Hebrew, but a literal translation into English is confusing and awkward: “the entire matter would not have been hidden from the king, while you stand off to the side.”
- 99,8d I don’t have a son who can make memorial offerings in my name:** The lack of a male heir is at odds with the statement in P92,3 (which is perhaps based on a separate tradition about Abshalom) that Abshalom had three sons and a daughter. I translate *hzkyr* as “make a memorial offering,” and take it to be a reference to the practice of honoring and preserving the memory of one’s ancestors by making offerings to one’s god(s) on their behalf. For this usage of the hiphil of *zkr*, see BDB, p. 271, def. 5. This practice sheds some insight into the rationale for the Theqo’ahite woman’s plea to Dawid at the end of P90,2 and for Sha’ul’s plea to Dawid in P52.
- Note to P99,9** **99,9a Please, let me run and give the news...:** The entire exchange here between Ahima’ats and Yo’ab is written in colloquial Hebrew. Unusually for Hebrew prose, the author in this exchange omits “he said” and minimizes the dialogue directions (e.g. “Yo’ab said to him”) to create greater immediacy in the scene and to make it more vivid.
- Note to P99,11** **99,11a confusion of battle was approaching:** This is an unusual usage of *šlh* with the direct object. Possibly this is another example of our author imitating spoken Hebrew.
- Note to P99,13** **99,13a back into town:** That is, back into Mahanayim, which served as the base for Dawid’s forces.
- Notes to P99,14** **99,14a Yo’ab went to see the king in the guard-house:** Presumably a structure on top of the town wall.
- 99,14b Loving those who despise you...:** A sentence fragment; here again, the author is imitating spoken Hebrew.
- 99,14c you would prefer not to have any generals or servants:** Literally, “you don’t have any generals or servants.” The sense of a wish or desire here is implied by context, as is often the case with Hebrew, with its much simpler approach towards verb tenses.
- 99,14d go outside right now:** The force of Hebrew *qwm* here is “immediately” and not “stand up.”

99,18a when all Yisra'el wishes for the king to return: The Hebrew here is very colloquial. Literally, “Yisra'el's word has reached the king to go home.”

**Notes to
P99,18**

99,18b my very flesh and blood: The Hebrew expression is “flesh and bones;” in English, we say “flesh and blood.”

99,18c say the following to Amasa: Dawid betrays Yo'ab to cut a deal with Amasa and remain in power. Dawid calls Amasa his “flesh and blood.” I believe this is a reference to the fact that Amasa (like Yo'ab and his brothers) is from Beth-Lehem, where Dawid's family is from. It also worth pointing out that Amasa may have been the grandson of Dawid's close ally, Nahash. See note 83a above on the close relations between Dawid and Nahash's family.

99,18d Shim'iy Gera'sson, a Yaminite from the village of Bahurim: The author uses Yaminite, Binyaminite, and Benyaminite interchangeably. Given that Shim'iy was able to muster one thousand fellow Benyaminites as well as Sha'ul's former steward Tsiba, it is clear that Shim'iy was very powerful within the Binyaminite tribe and within Sha'ul's family.

99,18e came down with the Yehudeans: Hebrew *yš* (“man”) is used as a collective noun here.

99,18f don't give any thought to your servant's wrong-doing: Shim'iy begs forgiveness for his behavior in P96,4-P96,6, when he accosted Dawid and insulted and cursed him on his flight from Yerushalem.

99,18g the first of all the Yosephites: This is the only explicit mention of the Yosephites in the book of Shmu'el. The Yosephites are traditionally understood to be the tribes of Ephrayim and Menashsheh; here, however, Shim'iy—who is of the tribe of Binyamin—calls himself a Yosephite, suggesting that in at least some traditions the Yosephites included the tribe of Binyamin.

99,19a Because of this, Shim'i won't be put to death?: “Because of this”—i.e. because of Shim'i's pleading and arriving first to greet Dawid.

Note to P99,19

99,21a Upon arriving in Yerushalem to meet the king: The author has mixed up the narrative. The encounter with Mephiba'al, which occurs here in the middle of the *parashah*, is set in Yerushalem after Dawid's return. The following *parashot* (P100-P100,1), however, take place earlier, when Dawid is still on the western bank of the Yarden river and has not yet returned to his capital.

**Notes to
P99,21**

99,21b one of my servants deceived me: Mephiba'al here accuses Tsiba of lying to Dawid about Mephiba'al's lack of loyalty. (Recall in P96,4 that Tsiba informed Dawid that Mephiba'al intended to stay behind in Yerushalem, hoping that Sha'ul's family would somehow be returned to power and that he would be made king. It's also worth noting that at the end of this speech, Mephiba'al refers to Dawid's kindness to him in granting him a permanent place at the king's table (see P82,2 for this).

100a The king cut him off. . . : The language of Dawid's reply is highly colloquial, and represents our author's imitation of spoken Hebrew.

Note to P100

Notes to P100,3	<p>100,3a Yisra'elites from all over: Literally, "every Yisra'elite." The force of the Hebrew <i>kōl</i> here is hard to bring over into English.</p> <p>100,3b Why did you let our brothers. . . : The exchange beginning here and continuing to the end of the <i>parashah</i> is another representation of spoken Hebrew. The "hyper-realism" of our author, so well represented here in this exchange, is unique in Tanakh.</p>
Note to P100,4	<p>100,4a does he supply us with our daily necessities?: Reading <i>ns'</i> here as a pi'el + infinitive absolute. For pi'el <i>ns'</i> meaning "supply, support," see BDB, p. 672. This meaning best fits the context—note the parallelism the prior clause ("do we get our food from the king?").</p>
Note to P100,5	<p>100,5a Of the twelve shares in the king: The author here references the tradition of ten northern tribes (as opposed to the tradition of five tribes of Yisra'el that he referenced in P70).</p>
Notes to P100,6	<p>100,6a loathsome scoundrel was there among those arguing: "Among those arguing" is absent from the Hebrew but implied by context.</p> <p>100,6b from the Yarden region as far as Yerushalem: A relatively small area, likely not more than 30-40 miles in diameter. Dawid controls only a small portion of his former kingdom.</p>
Note to P100,7	<p>100,7a present yourself to me: On this usage of <i>'md</i>, see BDB, p. 763, def. 1d. Usually followed by the preposition <i>lpny</i> ("before, in front of"), but here it is omitted, possibly because the author is imitating spoken Hebrew.</p>
Note to P100,8	<p>100,8a Yo'ab on that day was wearing. . . : The Hebrew here in this sentence is very difficult. Possibly there are two articles of clothing here—a coat and a tunic.</p>
Note to P100,9	<p>100,9a Abelah and Beth-Ma'akah: These towns are located in the Bashan region east of the Yarden river, in the far north of Yisra'el. If the tradition preserved here has some historical kernel of truth, this likely was a region over which Dawid had only tenuous control. It is worth noting that in P83 the King of Ma'akah fights against Dawid's forces as part of the Ammonite alliance.</p>
Notes to P100,10	<p>100,10a trying to undermine: The Hebrew verb here is derived from the word for "pit" (<i>šḥt</i>, from the root <i>šwh</i>) and is a technical term meaning "undermine." This same verb also occurs in Lam 2.8. This verb is not related to the common Hebrew verb <i>šḥt</i> ("ruin, spoil, destroy"). See the brief note in BDB, p. 1008.</p> <p>100,10b At first the townspeople were saying: The Hebrew, as is often the case, is pregnant here, and the subject must be inferred from the context. The "townspeople" are the inhabitants of Abelah Beth-Ma'akah. This entire speech of the 'wise woman' is difficult—possibly because our author was imitating the dialect of the Bashan region, where Abelah Beth-Ma'akah was located.</p>

100,10c They really ought to ask around...: That is, rather than put the town under seige, if only the Yehudeans had made peaceful inquiries in Abelah, they would have already accomplished their objective without causing any harm, as the townspeople would have handed over Sheba Bikriyyson.

100,10d I have an agreement with Yisra'elites loyal to Dawid: If the Hebrew here is not corrupt, then our author must be imitating the spoken dialect of northern Yisra'el. I have inferred "to Dawid" from context. The readings "an agreement with" and "loyal Yisra'elites" are unusual and somewhat forced. Possibly *šlmy* ("have an agreement with") is indicative of the form of the singular genitive construct of the northern Yisra'elite dialect, as understood by our author. The preference for the passive participle may also be a feature of this northern dialect—note the wise woman's use of the passive participle in P101: *r'šw mwšlk 'lyk* ("his head will be thrown to you"). If my translation is correct, the wise woman is saying that she represents Yisra'elites who are loyal to Dawid, and can negotiate on their behalf.

100,10e You're trying to slaughter entire towns and bereave mothers across Yisra'el: The Hebrew here is difficult, possibly because our author is imitating the dialect of northern Yisra'el. Literally, the sentence reads, "You are seeking to put to death city and mother in Yisra'el." I understand "put to death city and mother" to be an idiom of the northern Yisra'elite dialect, and so have rendered the phrase into a natural style of English. Both "city" and "mother" should be understood collectively. The collective use of the "city" and "mother" has no real parallel (see the discussion of collective nouns in GKC 122s and 123a-b), and may reflect our author's imitation of the northern Yisra'elite dialect.

101,1a Ira the Ya'irite was Dawid's personal priest: The original Shmu'el scroll ended here; the material that follows was added some time later—perhaps in the 5th or 4th century BCE, when these additional materials about Dawid were collected together and appended to the original.

Note to P101,1

101,3a so that you will have friendly relations: Hebrew says "they will have," but it is not unusual for spoken Hebrew to alternate second and third person. It is possible that the author of this supplementary material is imitating spoken Hebrew here, following the example of the original author. See BDB p. 139, def. 4h for this sense of *brk*.

Notes to P101,3

101,3b nor is there any man in Yisra'el whom we can put to death as recompense: Literally, "Nor do we have a man to put to death in Yisra'el.")

101,4a that is, between Dawid and Yehonathan Sha'ulsson: The author must add this phrase to clarify that the agreement was not between Mephiba'al and Dawid. (It is possible to understand the text this way because of the Hebrew convention of basing the surname on the patronym.)

Notes to P101,4

- 101,4b the five sons of Mikal Sha'ulsdaughter whom she bore to Adri'el Barzillais-son the Meholathite:** The author of this late passage here cites a tradition in which it is not Merab, but Mikal who marries Adri'el the Meholathite. In the tradition cited by the principal author of Shmu'el, it is Merab Sha'ulsdaughter who is Adri'el's wife (see P42,1).
- 101,4c Calling Yahweh as witness, they threw them off the cliff:** This appears to be some kind of execution rite. For this usage of the phrase *lpny yhwh* (literally, "in Yahweh's presence"), see note 51,15a.
- 101,4d For these men had stolen them. . . :** See the end of P65 for this story.
- Notes to P102**
- 102a who had a bronze spearhead weighing three hundred sheqels:** Approximately six and a half pounds. (See note 37b above.)
- 102b hadashah-armor:** Hebrew here says "new." If the text is not corrupt, this could be a technical term for a type of armor, which is how I have translated it here. Cf. the description of Golyath in P37, where the details of his weighty spearhead and special armor are given.
- Note to P103,1**
- 103,1a killed Golyath of Gath:** This supplementary story references an alternate tradition about Golyath's death.
- Note to P103,2**
- 103,2a Yehonathan Shima'sson:** Shima' is Dawid's brother, and so Yehonathan is the brother of Yonadab (Amnon's friend in P87).
- Notes to P104**
- 104a Dawid recited the words of this song to Yahweh. . . :** As mentioned above in note 1,1a, the song here in P104 is a variant of Psalm 18. The author who inserted this song into Shmu'el followed the textual layout for the Book of Psalms found in the Aleppo Codex and other Masoretic manuscripts, which was to mark the separation between successive lines of a song with the *parashah setumah*. For ease of understanding, I have not represented these *parashot setumot* in my translation, but have instead have laid out the song as poetry, in keeping with modern-day English practice.
- 104b fireballs flash from his body:** Hebrew *ghly 's* (literally, "fiery coals") appears to be specialized term for heavenly fireballs—that is, lightning flashes, or possibly, fiery meteors; see Ezekiel 1.13, which uses this term in parallel with *lpdym* ("lightning flashes").
- 104c he mounts a sphinx:** The name of Yahweh's battle-chest also references the flying sphinx as Yahweh's mode of transportation when he goes into battle. See comments above in note 8d.
- 104d with the perverted, you keep your distance:** Reading the verb as *plh* ("keep distinct, separate").
- 104e who fashions my arms:** Hebrew *nht* is to "press" or "bend" a bow. The image is of Yahweh bending Dawid's arms into a powerful bow.
- 104f You clothe me with the strength to do battle:** Literally, "gird, encompass." Reading the pi'el form of 'zr.

105a Yisra'el's foremost singer of songs: Literally, "Yisra'el's sweetest singer of songs." The Hebrew superlative is sometimes indicated, as here, by placing the adjective in a construct position with the noun it modifies (the "partitive genitive"). See GKC 133h.

Notes to P105

105b Is not my family right with El?: "El" is the name of a Canaanite god, and is sometimes used as an epithet of Yahweh in Hebrew poetry. The Hebrew here is somewhat difficult, but must be read as a question, as must the verse immediately following.

105c the iron tip at the end of a spear shaft: Hebrew reads "iron tip and a spear shaft." This juxtaposition is poetical in Hebrew, where in English we would join the two concepts into a single one.

106a These are the names of the military heroes: This *parashah* is in the form of a list. Similar to modern lists, the language in this list is abbreviated in numerous places, doesn't consistently follow grammatical rules, and abbreviates or elides whole words and ideas that must be supplied by the reader. As a result, the Hebrew in this list is difficult to read, a problem compounded by the fact that the text appears to be corrupt in several places. As with the lists in P11,5 - P11,10 and P63,1 - P63,14, in the Aleppo Codex and many other Masoretic manuscripts, each item in the list here is separated by a *parashah setumah*. (Somewhat unusually, the Leningrad Codex separates every other item in the list in this fashion.)

Notes to P106

106b chief quartermaster: The *šlyš* is a specialized term for a military or royal official, and is mentioned several times in the Book of Kings. He is associated with administration and logistics. The word may be related to the foreign word *sariys* (meaning "senior officer") in P16,2; see note 16,2c above.

106c His chief pleasure was the 'etsni': The Hebrew here is unintelligible. It may be corrupt, or may simply contain rare technical terms for which we can't determine the meaning. Possibly the text here should be emended to be consistent with language below "decorated his spear with the marks of" (on this phrase, see note 106,5a below).

106,1a he was one of the 'generals': The Hebrew term used here—*šlšh*—appears to be a specialized term for a kind of senior military officer. The term is based on the Hebrew root meaning "three" and may be related to the practice of dividing an army into three operating units, each with its own command structure (see P99,6, where Dawid does this with his forces prior to fighting Abshalom, and P22,1, where Sha'ul does this in his attack on Nahash the Ammonite).

Note to P106,1

106,3a (Dawid at the time was stationed. . . : The Hebrew here is difficult to understand; reading this sentence as a parenthetical makes it intelligible to the reader. If the author did not intend a parenthetical statement here, then the sentence may simply be a variant of the preceding sentence that was preserved in the Masoretic text.

Note to P106,3

106,5a He decorated his spear: Most translations here read "brandish." However, context suggests it is more likely that he is simply marking kills on his spear.

Notes to P106,5

- 106,5b Although he became their leader:** That is, he served as leader of the generals, but he wasn't officially promoted into their ranks.
- Note to P106,6** **106,6a appointed him head of his personal body-guard:** Literally, "placed him over his personal body-guard". It is perhaps worth noting that Dawid is said in P51,5 to have held this position under Sha'ul, and that he is said in P59 to have held a similar position under Akish.
- Note to P107** **107a commanding general of the army stationed with him:** This later author's use of the phrase "with him" in situations where it is superfluous is in imitation of the style of the book's principal author, who has a marked fondness for this construction.
- Notes to P107,1** **107,1a double the people in number one hundred times over:** A figure of speech, obviously. This number is equal to 2 to the 100th power, or 1.3e30.
- 107,1b all the way around to Tsidon:** The Phoenician cities of Tsidon and Tsor were never part of, or subjects of, Yisra'el, even at its largest extent.
- Note to P109** **109a consider carefully:** The author of this supplemental material is using idiomatic Hebrew here in imitation of Shmu'el's principal author, who uses this idiom three times in P46 (where I translate it as "study and observe" and "look closely and understand"). A literal translation of this idiom would be "know and see."
- Note to P109,1** **109,1a divine messenger:** A late concept, dating this supplement to one or two centuries after the main composition of the Book of Shmu'el.
- Note to P110** **110a Arawnah the king:** a mistake in the Hebrew. "The king" may have been inadvertently duplicated from the following phrase "to the king."
- Note to P110,1** **110,1a Total sentences in the book:** As a means to help safeguard the integrity of the text, at the end of each book in Tanakh the Masoretes included a short note (considered part of the *masorah gedolah*) that totalled up the number of sentences for that book. I have reproduced their note for Shmu'el here.

Index of characters

I provide here for the reader's reference an index of characters, grouped by family and other logical relationships. Grouping in this way enables the reader more easily to understand the connections between characters, which in many cases are not readily apparent within the text. It is easy to miss these connections because our author rarely draws explicit attention to them, meaning the connections often can only be deduced by examining the characters' surnames. Yet these connections—which were obvious to our author, and which would have been obvious to many ancient readers—often provide interesting insights into the narrative.

Abner Nersson, for example, is the head of Sha'ul's military forces, but he is also Sha'ul's first cousin. Although this family connection is only mentioned once in the text (see P30), awareness of this relationship enhances one's understanding of the interactions between Abner and Sha'ul and between Abner and Ish-Ba'al. Another example that is easily missed by most modern readers is the close connection Dawid has with the priesthood from Nob—a connection that is only apparent by a close examination of the surnames of the priests who serve Dawid (see the section below titled "Priests from Nob in the service of Dawid").

A second goal of this index is to provide a short summary of the central actions or characteristics associated with the characters in Shmu'el. It is likely that most of these actions and characteristics were present in some way in the oral and written sources that our author used as the basis of his composition. So, to a certain degree, the summary actions and characteristics below give us insight into the source material behind the stories in Shmu'el. While these source materials provided the building blocks of the narrative, the artistry of the Book of Shmu'el comes from how our author has stitched these materials together into a coherent narrative, and then added details, embellishments, and—above all—dialogue created from his

own imagination in order to develop the themes of his work and of the Deuteronomistic History.

**

Yahweh's cult in Shiloh

Eli: P1-P9. Yahweh's chief priest at Shiloh (P1). Father of Hophni and Phinhas (P1) and Shmu'el's mentor (P2, P4-P6). Cursed in oracle of Yahweh (P3). Death (P9).

Hophni and Phinhas Elisson: P1-P8. Sons of Eli and corrupt priests in Yahweh's cult at Shiloh (P2,1). Keepers of Yahweh's battle-chest (P8). Death in battle (P8).

Ikabod Phinhasson: Birth (P9). Uncle of Sha'ul's priest Ahiyah Ahitubsson (P25,4).

Shmu'el and his family

Elqanah Yerohamsson: Lives in the village of Ramah (P1). Husband of Peninah and Hannah and father of Shmu'el (P1-P2).

Hannah: Wife of Elqanah Yerohamsson and mother of Shmu'el (P1-P2). Prays for child at temple in Shiloh (P1,1). Dedicates Shmu'el to Yahweh (P1). Motherly devotion of (P2).

Shmu'el: Son of Elqanah Yerohamsson and Hannah (P1). Service at temple in Shiloh (P2, P4-P7,1). Leads Yisra'el in battles against the Philishtines (P8, P13). Meeting with Sha'ul (P18). Anointing and installation of Sha'ul as king (P19-P21,2). Dispute with Sha'ul and rejection of his kingship (P25-P25,1 and P32-P33,10). Visit to Beth-Lehem and anointing of Dawid (P34-P35). Visited by Dawid (P44,3). Death (P52,1). Conjured up from She'ol after death by Sha'ul (P60,2).

Yo'el and Abiyah Shmu'elsson: Sons of Shmu'el and corrupt governors in Be'er-Sheba (P14-P15).

Family of Sha'ul

Qish Abi'elsson: Father of Sha'ul (P18) and uncle of Abner Neresson (P30).

Sha'ul Qishsson: Son of Qish Abi'elsson (P18). Father of Yonathan, Yishwi, and Malki-Shu'ah (sons) and of Merab and Mikal (daughters) (P30). Married to Ahino'am Ahima'atsdaughter (P30). Has two sons, Armoni and Mephiba'al, by his concubine Ritspah Ayyahsdaughter (P101,4).

Search for missing asses and meeting with Shmu'el (P18-P18,3). Anointed by Shmu'el (P19). Possession by spirits, chanting and prophesying (P19,1-P19,2). Installed as king by Shmu'el (P20-P21,2). Defeats Nahash the Ammonite (P22-P22,1). Dispute with Shmu'el and rejection by him (P25-P25,1, P32-P33,10). Defeats Philishtines (P28). Pronounces death sentence on son Yonathan (P29,1-P29,3). Fights

against foreign peoples (P29,4). Defeats Amaleq (P31,2). Visits necromancer to conjure up Shmu'el (P60-P60,2). Death (P64) and burial (P65).

Jealousy of, suspicion of, and attack on Dawid (P41-P43,3). Journey to Ramah in search of Dawid, and possession by a divine spirit (P44,4). Attack on Yehonathan over his alliance with Dawid (P48-P48,3). Slaughter of Ahimelek Ahitubsson and the entire Nob priesthood (P51,3-P51,6). Pursuit of Dawid in the Ziph wilderness (P51,2; P51,10; P51,14; P51,16-P51,18). Confrontation with Dawid outside cave (P51,19-P52). Encounter with Dawid at Hekilah valley (P53,2-P56).

Merab Sha'ulsdaughter: Promised to Dawid as wife, but given instead to Adri'el the Meholite (P42-P42,1).

Mikal Sha'ulsdaughter: Love for and marriage to Dawid (P42,1). Helps Dawid escape from Sha'ul (P44-P44,3). Given to Palti'el Layishsson as wife (P53,2). Brought back to Dawid by Abner (P72,3). Confronts Dawid over his behavior with the battle-chest (P79,1). The Gib'onites' sacrifice of her children by Adri'el Barzillaisson (P101,4).

Yehonathan Sha'ulsson: Son of Sha'ul (P30). Attack on the Philistine garrison in Gib'ah (P25 and P25,4-P26). Sentenced to death by his father Sha'ul (P29,1-P29,3). Love for Dawid (P40,7). Successful plea to Sha'ul to spare Dawid (P43,2). Pact with Dawid (P45-P47,4). Confronted by Sha'ul over loyalty to Dawid (P48-P48,3). Farewell to Dawid (P48,4-P48,5). Dies with brothers in battle with Philistines (P64).

Ish-Ba'al Sha'ulsson: King of Yisra'el after death of Sha'ul (P70). Dispute with Abner over his concubine (P72-P72,1). Murdered by Ba'anah and Rekab Rimonsen (P73,1).

Mephiba'al Yehonathansson: Son of Yehonathan (P73,1). Story behind lameness of (P73,1). Audience with Dawid (P82,2). Lives apart from son Mika and eats at Dawid's table (P82,2). Remains in Yerushalem during Abshalom's rebellion (P96,4). Audience with Dawid on his return to Yerushalem (P99,21-P100).

Ritspah Ayyahsdaughter: Concubine of Sha'ul (P72). Has intercourse with Abner Nersson (P72). Two sons by Sha'ul (Armoni and Mephiba'al) sacrificed by the Gib'onites (P101,4). Protects corpses of two sons from wild animals (P101,4).

Tsiba: Chief steward of Sha'ul (P82,2). Manages Mephiba'al's estate (P82,2). Audience with Dawid (P82,2). Supplies Dawid with provisions on flight from Yerushalem (P96,4). Helps Dawid cross the Yarden on Dawid's return to Yerushalem (P99,18).

Ner Abi'elsson: Uncle to Sha'ul and father of Abner (P30). Greets Sha'ul on his return from looking for the lost asses (P19,2).

Ab(i)ner Nersson: Sha'ul's cousin and head of his army (P30). Presents Dawid to Sha'ul (P40,7). Dines regularly with Sha'ul (P47,5). Confronted by Dawid in the wilderness (P54-P55). Installs Ish-Ba'al as king of Yisra'el (P70). Kills Asah'el Tseruyahsson (P71,1). Falls out with Ish-Ba'al over the concubine Ritspah Ayyahsdaughter (P72-P72,1). Defects to Dawid and secures Yisra'el's support for him (P72,2). Honored by Dawid with a feast (P72,3). Killed by Yo'ab in Hebron (P72,3). Mourned by Dawid (P72,4-P72,5).

Shim'i Gera'sson: Member of Sha'ul's clan (P96). Curses Dawid as Dawid flees Yerushalem (P96,4-P96,6). On Dawid's return to Yerushalem, greets Dawid at Yarden River and begs his forgiveness (P99,18).

Officials in Sha'ul's service

Ahiyah Ahitubsson: Sha'ul's head priest (P25,4, P27, P29,1). A member the priestly clan in Shiloh, and nephew of Ikabod Phinhasson (P25,4).

Do'eg the Edomite: Head of Sha'ul's shepherds (P50). Vigil at Yahweh's temple in Nob (P50). Slaughter of Ahimelek Ahitubsson's family (priesthood at Nob) (P51,6).

Family of Dawid

Yishai of Beth-Lehem: Father of eight sons, including Dawid, Eli'ab, Abinadab, and Shammah (P34).

Eli'ab, Abinadab, and Shammah Yishaisson: Deemed unsuitable by Shmu'el to be king (P34-P34,1). Follow Sha'ul to war against the Philishtines (P38-P40).

Dawid Yishaisson: Selected by Shmu'el to be king (P35). Care-taker of family's sheep (P34,1, P38,1, P40-P40,1). Enters service of Sha'ul as a court musician (P36). Takes provisions to Yisra'elite battle-lines (P39-P39,1). Fights and kills the Phishishtine warrior Golyath (P40,3-P40,5). Enters Sha'ul's military service (P40,7). Military success and popularity (P41, P43, P43,3). Promised but not given Merab Sha'uldaughter as wife (P42-P42,1). Wins Mikal Sha'uldaughter in marriage (P42,1). Escape from Sha'ul's murder attempt and flight to Shmu'el (P43,3, P44-P44,3). Return to Sha'ul's court (P45). Pact with Yehonathan (P45-P47,3). Good-bye to Yehonathan (P48,5). Flight to Yahweh's temple at Nob and receipt of Golyath's sword (P49-P50,2). Refuge with Akish king of Gath (P50,2). Leader of band of outlaws in the wilderness (P51). Shelters parents in Mo'ab (P51). Defends Qe'ilah from Philishtine attack (P51,7-P51,9). Flight from Qe'ilah and life in the Ziph wilderness (P51,10-P51,15). Escape from Sha'ul while in Ziph (P51,16). Surveillance of Sha'ul in cave, and confrontation outside (P51,18-P52).

Story of aborted attack on Karmel and marriage to Abigayil (P53-P53,1). Takes Ahino'am as wife (P53,1). Stealing into Sha'ul's camp and subsequent confrontation with Sha'ul (P53,2-P56). Stories of service under Akish, king of Gath, including gift of town of Tsiqlag (P57-P59, P61-P62,2). Story of vengeance for Tsiqlag's destruction (P62,4-P62,5). Division of spoils captured from Amaleqite raiders (P62,5-P63,13). Report of deaths of Sha'ul and Yonathan, and mourning for them (P66). Execution of Sha'ul's killer (P67). Dirge for Sha'ul and Yonathan (P68).

Relocation to Hebron and installation as king of Yehudah (P69). Demands loyalty from Yabesh-Gil'ad (P69,1). Rivalry with Ish-Ba'al (P71). Fathers children in Hebron (P71,2). Agreement with Abner in order to win Yisra'el's loyalty (P72,2). Return of wife Mikal (P72,3). Feast for Abner (P72,3). Mourning for death of Abner (P72,4-P72,5). Execution of Ba'anah and Rekab Rimonsso (P73,1). Installation as king

of Yisra'el by the Yisra'elite elders (P74). Capture of Yerushalem and its fortress (P74). Renames fortress 'Dawidstown' (P74). Relocation of royal city from Hebron to Yerushalem (P74). Hires Hiram king of Tsor to build royal palace (P75). Additions to wives and children in Yerushalem (P75,1). Defeats Philishtines at Ba'al-Paratsim (P77). Defeats Philishtines at Repha'im Valley (P78). Transfer of battle-chest from Gib'ah to Yerushalem (P79). Confronted by Mikal (P79,1). Oracle from Nathan saying not to build a temple to Yahweh in Yerushalem (P80,1-P80,2). Praises Yahweh for blessings (P81). Fights and defeats foreign kings of the neighboring lands (P82-P82,1). Kindness toward Yonathan's son Mephiba'al (P82,2). Story of delegation to Hanun king of Ammon (P83). Defeats Aram at Helam and kills Shobak (P83,1).

Story of Bath-Sheba (key events include seduction of Bathsheba, attempted cover-up with her husband Uriyah, murder of Uriyah, and subsequent marriage of Dawid to Bath-Sheba) (P84-P84,3). Oracle of Nathan damning him for the taking of Bath-Sheba (P85-P85,3). Prayer for sick infant (P85,5). Fathers Shelomoh by Bath-Sheba (P85,5). Defeat of Ammon and capture of Rabbah (P86). Story of Tamar's rape (P87). Story of Amnon's murder and exile of Abshalom (P88-P90). Audience with the Theqo'ahite woman (P90,1-92). Story of Abshalom's return and audience with Dawid (P92,1-P94). Grants Abshalom permission to go to Hebron (P95).

Story of Abshalom's rebellion and flight from Yerushalem (key events include abandonment of concubines, inclusion of Ittay of Gath, return of battle-chest to Yerushalem, establishment of intelligence agents in Yerushalem and in Abshalom's inner circle, audience with Tsiba, confrontation with Shim'i Gera'sson, receipt of Abshalom's plans and flight across Yarden River) (P96,6). Story of Abshalom's death (key events involving Dawid include establishment of base at Mahanayim, organization of military forces, advice not to harm Abshalom, report of victory and of Abshalom's death, mourning over death of Abshalom, confrontation by Yo'ab) (P99,4-P99,16). Story of return to power and return to Yerushalem (key events include negotiation with Yehudean elders to regain their loyalty, negotiation for Amasa's loyalty, audience with Shim'i Gera'sson, audience with Mephiba'al, audience with Barzillai and crossing of Yarden River) (P99,17-P100,2). Placement of concubines under house arrest (P100,6). Story of Sheba Bikriysson's rebellion (P100,6-P101).

Turns over descendants of Sha'ul to Gib'onites for execution (P101,3-P101,4). Compassion for Mephiba'al (P101,4). Re-burial of Sha'ul and Yonathan and burial of men executed by Gib'onites (P101,4). Saved by Abiyshai from attack by Philistine warrior Yishbi (P102). Song sung when escaping Sha'ul (P104). Dawid's last words (P105). Story of census of Yisra'el, resulting plague and building of altar to Yahweh (P107-P110,1).

Ahino'am of Yizra'el: Taken by Dawid as wife (P53,1). Lives with Dawid in Gath (P57). Captured by Amaleqites (P62,3). Moves to Hebron with Dawid (P69). Mother of Dawid's oldest son, Amnon (P71,2).

Abigayil NabalofKarmelwife: Wife of Nabal, a wealthy rancher (P53). Industriousness and beauty of (P53). Convinces Dawid to halt his attack (P53). Taken by Dawid as wife (P53,1). Lives with Dawid in Gath (P57). Captured by Amaleqites (P62). Moves to Hebron with Dawid (P69). Mother of Dawid's son, Kil'ab (P71,2).

Bath-Sheba Eli'amsdaughter: Wife of Uriyah the Hittite (P84,1). Extraordinary beauty of (P84,1). Has sexual intercourse with Dawid (P84,1). Taken by Dawid as wife after Uriyah's death (P84,3). Consolated by Dawid after death of child (P85,5). Mother of Shelomoh (P85,5).

Mikal Sha'ulsdaughter: See above in the notes for Sha'ul's family members.

Amnon Dawidsson: First-born of Dawid in Hebron (P71,2). Love for half-sister Tamar (P87). Plays sick in order to see Tamar (P87). Rapes Tamar (P87). Killed by Abshalom's servants (P88,1).

Abshalom Dawidsson: Third-born of Dawid by Ma'akah Talmaysdaughter in Hebron (P71,2). Grandson of Talmay, king of Geshur (P71,2). Brother of Tamar (P87). Father of three sons and a daughter named Tamar (P92,3). Has no sons (P99,8).

Provides shelter to Tamar after rape by Amnon (P87). Has Amnon murdered to avenge rape of Tamar (P88). Flees to Geshur and seeks refuge with his grandfather, who is king there (P90). Brought back to Yerushalem by Yo'ab (P92,1). Refused an audience with Dawid (P92,2). Personal beauty of (P92,3). Has Yo'ab's property burned (P93). Audience with Dawid after his return (P94). Won favor of Yisra'elites (P94,1). Rebellion against Dawid from Hebron (P95-96). Entry into Yerushalem (P97). Has sexual intercourse with Dawid's concubines (P98). Receives counsel about how to pursue Dawid (P98,1-P99). Pursuit of and fight against Dawid (P99,4-P99,8). Caught in a tree and killed by Yo'ab (P99,8). Corpse thrown into a pit (P99,8). Memorial stele in King's Valley (P99,8).

Yonadab Shim'ahsson: Son of Dawid's brother Shim'ah and friend of Amnon (P87). Wisdom of (P87). Advises Amnon on how to get Tamar alone (P87). Informs Dawid of the safety of his children and of death of Amnon (P89,1-P90).

Officials in King Dawid's service

Gad the prophet: Advisor to Dawid in the wilderness (P51,1). Delivers oracle to Dawid after census (P109). Orders Dawid to build altar to Yahweh (P110).

Nathan the prophet: Delivers oracle to Dawid telling him not to build a temple in Yerushalem (P80,1-P80,2). Delivers oracle to Dawid promising disaster over his taking of Bath-Sheba (P85,2-P85,3). Delivers oracle demanding Shelomoh's name be changed (P85,5).

Yo'ab Tseruyahsson: Son of Tseruyah Nahashsdaughter; possibly grandson of Nahash, king of Ammon (P99,4). Brother of Abiyshai and Asah-el (P53,2, P71,1). Born in Beth-Lehem (P71,1). Cousin of Amasa (P99,4). Head of Dawid's army (P82,1, P101,1).

Story of Asah-el's death (meeting with Abner, combat between their men, pursuit of Abner, burial of Asah-el) (P71,1). Murder of Abner and its aftermath (P72,3). Leads army to victory over Ammonites and Arameans (P83). Siege of Rabbah in Ammon (P84). Has Uriyah killed at Dawid's request (P84,2). Attacks and captures Rabbah in Ammon (P86). Story of wise woman of Theqo'ah (P90,1). Returns Abshalom from Geshur (P92,1). Facilitates Abshalom's audience with Dawid (P93-P94).

Leads Dawid's forces against Abshalom (P99,6). Kills Abshalom in terebrinth tree (P99,8). Sends news of victory and of Abshalom's death to Dawid (P99,9). Confronts Dawid over his mourning for Abshalom (P99,14). Story of Sheba Bikriysson's rebellion (murder of Amasa, seige of Abelah, execution of Sheba) (P100,6-P101). Conducts census of Yisra'el and Yehudah (P107-P107,1).

Abiyshai Tseruyahsson: Son of Tseruyah Nahashsdaughter; possibly grandson of Nahash, king of the Ammonites (P99,4). Brother of Yo'ab (P53,2; P71,1). Brother of Asah-el (P71,1). One of Dawid's generals (P106,5).

Steals Sha'ul's spear and water as Sha'ul sleeps (P53,2-P54). With Yo'ab, pursues Abner after murder of Asah-el (P71,1). Leads Yisra'elites into battle against Ammon (P83). Offers to kill Shim'i Gera'sson during Dawid's flight from Yerushalem (P96,4). Leads Dawid's forces against Abshalom (P99,6). Offers to kill Shim'i Gera'sson on Dawid's return to Yerushalem (P99,19). Story of Sheba Bikriysson's rebellion (pursues Sheba) (P100,8-P100,9). Saves Dawid by killing the Philistine Yishbi of Nob (P102).

Asah-el Tseruyahsson: Son of Tseruyah Nahashsdaughter and brother of Yo'ab and Abiyshai (P71,1). Possibly grandson of Nahash, king of the Ammonites (P99,4). Fleet-footed (P71,1). Tries to kill Abner in sport between Ish-Ba'al's men and Dawid's men (P71,1). Murdered by Abner (P71,1). Buried in ancestral town of Beth-Lehem (P71,1). Considered one of the 'Thirty' (P106,7).

Uriyah the Hittite: Husband of Bath-Sheba (P84,1). Audience with Dawid (P84,1). Refusal to visit wife (P84,1). Death in battle (P84,2). Great warrior of Dawid (P106,37).

Ahithophel the Gilonite: From the town of Gilo (P96). Advisor to Dawid who defects to Abshalom (P96). Enters Yerushalem with Abshalom (P97). Advises Abshalom to have sex in public with Dawid's concubines (P98). Advice like an oracle of god (P98). Advises immediate attack on Dawid (P98,1). Rejection and suicide of (P99,3).

Hushai the Arkite: Returns to Yerushalem to counteract Ahithophel's advice (P96,3). Initial audience with Abshalom (P97). Advice to Abshalom counters that of Ahithophel (P98,3). Sends Tsadoq and Ebyathar to Dawid with advice to flee (P99,2).

Ittay the Gittite: Exile from Gath (P96,1). Flees with Dawid (P96,1). Commands Dawid's forces in battle against Abshalom (P99,6).

Priests from Nob in the service of Dawid

Ahimelek Ahitubsson: Priest to Yahweh at Nob (P49-P50). Gives provisions and Golyath's sword to Dawid (P49-P50). Killed with family by Do'eg the Edomite (P51,6). Father of Ebyathar (P51,6). Possibly brother of Tsadoq Ahitubsson (P82,1).

Ebyathar Ahimeleksson: Son of Ahimelek Ahitubsson in the priesthood at Nob (P51,6). Escapes from Nob and joins up with Dawid at Qe'ilah (P51,6). Brings ephod to Dawid (P51,10). Provides oracles to Dawid in the wilderness (P51,7-P51,9; P51,11-P51,13; P62,4). Son Ahimelek becomes one of Dawid's chief priests during Dawid's kingship (P82,1). Returns to Yerushalem with battle-chest at behest of Dawid (P96,3).

Has son Yehonathan (P96,3). Given secret intelligence by Hushai about Abshalom's plans (P99,2). Convinces Yehudean elders to put their fealty back with Dawid (P99,18). Along with Tsadoq, one of Dawid's two head priests (P101,1).

Ahimelek Ebyatharsson: With Tsadoq, one of Yahweh's two chief priests at Yerushalem during Dawid's reign (P82,1). From the priestly clan of Ahitub at Nob. Son of Ebyathar Ahimeleksson (see above) (P82,1), and grandson of Ahimelek Ahitubsson.

Yehonathan Ebyatharsson: Son of Ebyathar the priest (P96,3). Priest in cult of Yahweh at Yerushalem, and likely younger brother of Ahimelek Ebyatharsson. With Ahima'ats, hides in cistern from Abshalom's men (P99,2). With Ahima'ats, takes Hushai's message about Abshalom's plans to Dawid (P99,3).

Tsadoq Ahitubsson: One of two chief priests in the cult of Yahweh at Yerushalem during Dawid's reign (P82,1). From the priestly clan of Ahitub at Nob. Likely cousin or second-cousin to Ahimelek Ebyatharsson. Flees Yerushalem with the battle-chest, but returns it at Dawid's behest (P96,1-P96,3). Father of Ahima'ats (P96,3). Serves as spy in Yerushalem for Dawid (P96,3). Given secret intelligence by Hushai about Abshalom's plans (P99,2). Convinces Yehudean elders to put their fealty back with Dawid (P99,8). Along with Ebyathar, one of Dawid's two head priests (P101,1).

Ahima'ats Tsadoqsson: Priest in cult of Yahweh at Yerushalem and son of Tsadoq Ahitubsson (P96,3). With Yehonathan, hides in cistern from Abshalom's men (P99,2). With Yehonathan, takes Hushai's message about Abshalom's plans to Dawid (P99,3). Pleads with Yo'ab to run to Dawid with the news of Abshalom's defeat and death (P99,9). Gives Dawid news of victory, but fears to tell him Abshalom is dead (P99,10-P99,11).

Foreign allies and enemies

Nahash the Ammonite: King of Ammon (P24, P83). Threatens Yabesh-Gil'ad (P22). Defeated by Sha'ul (P22,1). Allied with Dawid (P83). Possibly father of Shobiy, Abigal and Tseruyah (P99,4-P99,5).

Hiram, king of Tsor: Sends Dawid materials and workers to build his palace (P75).

Hanun Nahashsson: King of Ammon and son of Nahash (P83). Humiliates delegation sent by Dawid (P83).

Shobiy Nahashsson: Possibly son of Nahash, king of Ammon (P99,5). Supplies Dawid's troops with food at their base in Mahanayim (P99,5).

Agag, king of the Amaleq: Defeated by Sha'ul (P31,2). Executed by Shmu'el (P33,9).

Golyath of Gath: Taunts Yisra'elite troops (P37; P39,1). Killed in combat by Dawid (P40,5). Killed by Elhanan Yaray-Oregimsson from Beth-Lehem (P103,1).

Akish Ma'okson, king of Gath: Provides refuge to Dawid in flight from Sha'ul (P50,1; P57). Gives Dawid the town of Tsiqlag (P57,1). Trust in Dawid (P58). Appoints Dawid to a position on his personal bodyguard (P59). Defends Dawid to other Philistine

chieftains (P61). Sends Dawid away at behest of other Philishtine chieftains (P62,1-P62,2).

Hadadezer Rehobsson: King of Tsobah (P82). Defeated by Dawid's forces near the River Perath (P82). Gold and copper stores in cities Betah and Berothay looted by Dawid (P82). Seeks assistance from Aram in fight against Dawid (P83). Defeated by Yisra'el and sues for peace (P83,1).

Shobak: General of army of Hadadezer, king of Aram (P83,1). Killed in battle against Dawid (P83,1).

Talmay Amihudsson: King of Geshur (P90). Father of Dawid's wife Ma'akah and grandfather of Abshalom (P71,2). Shelters Abshalom after Amnon's murder (P90).

Other named characters

Nabal the Karmelite: Wealthy rancher unfair in his business dealings (P53). Married to Abigayil (P53). Insults Dawid's men (P53). Dies of heart-attack after drinking bout (P53,1).

Ba'anah and Rekab Rimonsson: Binyaminites from the town of Be'erot (P73). Head of Ish-Ba'al's raiding parties (P73). Sneak into Ish-Ba'al's house and kill him (P73,1). Bring Ish-Ba'al's head to Dawid (P73,1). Executed on orders from Dawid (P73,1).

Abinadab of Gib'ah: Battle-chest kept at his house in Gib'ah after its return from the Philishtines (P11,11).

El'azar Abinadabsson: Caretaker of battle-chest after its return from the Philishtines (P11,11).

Uzza and Ahyo Abinadabsson: Caretakers of the battle-chest in Gib'ah (P79). Ride with battle-chest during transfer to Yerushalem (P79). Uzza killed after touching battle-chest (P79). Sons of Abinadab of Gib'ah and brothers of El'azar (P11).

Barzillai the Gil'adite: Supplies Dawid and his men with food and provisions in their camp at Mahanayim (P99,5). Accompanies Dawid back over Yarden on his return (P100,1). Asks Dawid to accept Kimham into his retinue (P100,1).

Sheba Bikriysson: Leads Yisra'elite rebellion against Dawid (P100,6). Seeks refuge in Abelah Beth-Ma'akah (P100,10). Killed and beheaded by townspeople of Abelah (P101). Head thrown over wall to Yo'ab (P101).

Arawnah the Yebusite: Sells threshing floor to Dawid (P110-P110,1).

Anonymous characters

King of Mo'ab: Gives shelter to Dawid's parents when he flees from Sha'ul (P51).

Woman from Eyn-Dor: Skilled in necromancy (P60). Visited by Sha'ul and his officials (P60). Conjures Shmu'el for Sha'ul (P60). Feeds Sha'ul and his officials before sending them on their way (P60,2).

Egyptian servant-boy: Found in wilderness and revived by Dawid and his men (P62,5). Leads Dawid and his men to Amaleqite raiding party (P62,5).

Son of Amaleqite immigrant: Escapes from Yisra'elite army after battle against Philistines (P66). Delivers news of Sha'ul's death to Dawid (P66). Claims to have delivered death-blow to Sha'ul (P66). Executed on orders from Dawid (P67).

Wise woman of Theqo'ah: Asked by Yo'ab to pretend to be a widow and make a plea to Dawid (P90,1). Makes a plea to Dawid (P90,1-P91,2). Admits to Dawid that Yo'ab was behind her plea (P92).

The Cushite: Messenger who delivers news of Abshalom's death to Dawid (P99,12).

Wise woman (of Abelah): Negotiates with Yo'ab regarding the siege of Abelah (P101). Persuades townspeople to kill Sheba in order to put an end to Yo'ab's siege of the town (P101).

The geography of Shmu'el

In telling the stories of Shmu'el, Sha'ul and Dawid, the primary author of the Book of Shmu'el mentions dozens of place names. Even after we exclude those that are incidental to the narrative, we are still left with more than thirty locations that serve as the setting for the book's principal events. Because it is useful to have some knowledge of where all these places are in relation to one another, I have provided readers with a set of maps on pages 205-208. These maps show scholars' best guesses as to the location of the places where the stories in the book take place. This should help readers appreciate the scale of the action within the book, and so better understand the flow of the narrative.

As even a casual reader will observe, the Book of Shmu'el is organized into collections of stories about its three main characters—Shmu'el, Sha'ul, and Dawid. In composing these stories, our author relied on a variety of sources for the basic framework of the narrative, and then filled in details from his own imagination and from themes given to him by his editor, the Deuteronomist. While we have no way of knowing with certainty the nature of our author's sources, it is reasonable to suppose that he relied primarily on oral traditions and only secondarily on written documents. Relevant written sources available to him were likely very few in number, given that he was writing some four centuries after the events he describes and given that the circumstances in Yerushalem at the time he was writing—in the aftermath of the destruction of Yahweh's temple and during the exile of the king and his officials—would not have been conducive to the preservation of written documents.

The stories in the Book of Shmu'el appear to stem primarily from five distinct bodies of traditions and stories. The tenuous ways in which these different bodies of tradition are linked with one another within Shmu'el suggests that these traditions were by and large formed independently of one another. Part of the author's artistry, then, was fashioning vignettes (or *parashot*) around bits and pieces of

these traditions, and then weaving these vignettes together in a way that developed the larger themes of his own work and that furthered the themes of the Deuteronomistic History. In my view, the five bodies of tradition were: a collection of traditions and stories from Shiloh about Yahweh's battle-chest and the wars with the Philistines; a group of traditions, perhaps from Ramah, about the judge and prophet Shmu'el; a group of traditions from the tribal regions of Benjamin and Gad about Sha'ul and the establishment of his kingship; a group of traditions from southern Yehudah about Dawid the outlaw; and, lastly, a group of traditions and stories from Yerushalem about Dawid and his kingship. Interwoven with these raw materials are additional stories not based on any sources but that were the sole creations of our author and of his editor, the Deuteronomist.

It is noteworthy that the place names which serve as the setting for the book's principal actions are contained within a very small area. From the northernmost locations of the stories in the book (Gilbo'a, Yabesh-Gil'ad, and Mahanayim) to the southernmost locations (Karmel, Ziph and Tsiqlag) is not more than 80 miles. Yerushalem sits in approximately the geographical midpoint. Moreover, the actions associated with each group of stories—those about Shmu'el, those about Yahweh's battle-chest, those about Sha'ul, those about Dawid the outlaw, and those about Dawid the king—cluster even more tightly within this small area.

The geographical compactness of the regions described within these traditions provides a hint at just how small the historical "kingdoms" of Sha'ul and Dawid may have been. Based on the stories preserved by our author, Sha'ul's domain may have been limited to only the region of Binyamin, the Ephrayim hill country, the region of Gad, and the far southern portions of Manasseh—a region of roughly 20-30 miles from north to south, and perhaps 40-50 miles from east to west. The area under Dawid's control may not have been much larger. The stories of Abner's attempt to convince Yisra'el's elders to throw their loyalty behind Dawid (P72) and of Shim'i's rebellion (P100-101)—if they reflect kernels of actual historical events—suggest that Dawid had a very tenuous control over the area of Sha'ul's former kingdom (Binyamin, Gad, and Ephrayim). Even his control over Yehudah does not seem to have been particularly strong, as is suggested by Abshalom using Hebron as his initial base of power.

Locations in the Shmu'el traditions

The Shmu'el stories are set primarily in the Ephrayim hill country, centered around the towns of Ramah, Shiloh, Beth-El, Gilgal, and Mitspah. Most of the material about Shmu'el does not appear to rely on ancient tradition, but rather to have been created by our author and by the Deuteronomist to fit the themes of their work. See map on page 205 for the locations listed below.

Ramah: Home to Shmu'el's parents, Elqanah and Hannah (P1-P2). Home to Shmu'el (P15). Home to Shmu'el at his death (P52,1). The ancient tradition linking Shmu'el to Ramah seems to have had few real details. The interactions between Hannah and Elqanah in Ramah are almost certainly the creation of our author.

Shiloh: Site of cult to Yahweh in his role as war god (P1-P3). Location of temple where Shmu'el was dedicated and grew to manhood (P1-P2, P4-P7,1). Associated with Shmu'el in his role as a prophet (P4-P7,1).

Beth-El, Gilgal, Mitspah: Associated with Shmu'el's "circuit" in his role as "governor" (P13). Likely an ancient tradition, but there are very few details in the narrative. The association of Mitspah with the role of kingship in P20-P21,1 is likely an invention of the Deuteronomist and not part of ancient tradition.

Be'er-Sheba: Associated with Shmu'el's corrupt sons, Yo'el and Abiyah (P14). Incidental to the Shmu'el stories, but likely has its source in ancient tradition. It is possible that the author (or the Deuteronomist) invented the link between Shmu'el and Yo'el and Abiyah in order to provide additional rationale for the adoption of kingship.

Locations in the traditions about Yahweh's battle-chest

The stories about Yahweh's battle-chest and its role in the wars with the Philistines are set in the Ephrayim hill country, the northern part of Yehudah, and the major Philistine towns. The primary locations of action in this body of traditions are Shiloh, Ashdod, Ashqelon, Beth-Shemesh, Qiryath-Ye'arim, and Gib'ah.

The stories about the battle-chest's transfer to Yerushalem, if not a creation of our author, appear to have their origin in traditions about Dawid (see below). See map on page 205 for the locations listed below.

Shiloh: Site of cult to Yahweh in his incarnation of god of war and home to battle-chest (P8-P9). Associated with the keepers of the battle-chest, Hophni and Phinhas, and with their father Eli (P8-P9). Associated with traditions about Philistine wars (P8). It is noteworthy that Shmu'el is almost entirely absent from the material about the battle-chest that is set in Shiloh.

Eben-haEzer, Apheq: Yehudean towns associated with traditions about Philistine wars and battle-chest (P8 and P13).

Ashdod, Ashqelon, Aza, Eqron, Gath: Philishtine towns associated with traditions about Philishtine wars and about Yahweh's battle-chest (P10-P11,2; P11,5-P11,10; P13).

Beth-Shemesh: Yehudean town associated with traditions about the return of Yahweh's battle-chest (P11,3-P11,4; P11,11).

Qiryath-Ye'arim, Gib'ah: Yehudean towns associated with traditions about the return of Yahweh's battle-chest (P11,11-P12). Location of battle-chest after its return from the Philistines and prior to its removal by Dawid to Yerushalem (P11,11-P12; P79). (Although separate towns, Gib'ah was considered part of Qiryath-Ye'arim.)

Mitspah: Associated with traditions about Philishtine wars (although the battle-chest is absent from the material about Mitspah) (P13).

Locations in the traditions about Sha'ul

Our author seems to have had limited knowledge of independent traditions about Sha'ul. Most of the material about Sha'ul appears in traditions about Dawid, or in material about Shmu'el that likely was invented by our author and by the Deuteronomist in order to develop a number of the major themes of the Deuteronomistic History. Some of the stories about Sha'ul are set in anonymous locations. For example, the town where Sha'ul meets Shmu'el for the first time is never mentioned in the text (though the mention of the region of Tsuph is a clue that the town was Ramah). Similarly, the name of the town where Sha'ul ruled as king is never mentioned (though a clue in P51,2 suggests it is his home town of Gib'ah).

The locations listed below are those that I believe are most likely connected to the independent traditions about Sha'ul. See map on page 206.

Binyamin region: Native region of Sha'ul and his family (P18).

Region of Tsuph: Region where Sha'ul first meets Shmu'el (P18). The town where Sha'ul meets Shmu'el is unnamed (P18), but is likely Ramah. (Ramah is not integral to the Sha'ul narrative. The mention in P33,10 is likely introduced by our author, who has written material portraying Shmu'el's break with Sha'ul.)

Gib'ah: Sha'ul's home town (P21,1; P22; P33,10). Where Sha'ul is possessed by divine spirits (P19,1). Location of one of Sha'ul's garrisons and site of battle against Philistines (P25). Site of tamarisk tree under which Sha'ul lived (P51,2). Site where Sha'ul lived (P53,2).

Mitspah: Site where Sha'ul is selected as king by lot (P20-P21).

Tseltzah, Elon-Tabor: Associated with story of Sha'ul's possession by divine spirits (P19).

Yabesh-Gil'ad, Bezeq: Locations associated with Sha'ul's victory over Nahash the Ammonite (P22).

Gilgal: Location of reaffirmation of Sha'ul's kingship (P22,1). Associated with traditions about the Philistine wars (P25). Associated with the execution of Agag king of the Amaleqi (P33,9).

Mikmash, Beth-Awen, Migron, Ayalon: Associated with traditions about the Philistine wars (P25; P25,4; P28,1).

Tela'im, Hewilah, Shur, Karmel: Associated with stories about Sha'ul's battles with the Amaleqi (P31,2; P32).

Shunem, (Mount) Gilbo'a, Apheq, Yizra'el: Associated with traditions about the deaths of Sha'ul and Yonathan (P60, P61, P64).

Traditions about Ish-Ba'al Sha'ulsson

The Ish-Ba'al material does not appear to be independent, but rather seems derived from the body of traditions about how Dawid became king of the northern tribes.

Mahanayim: Royal city of Ish-Ba'al (P70).

Gib'on: Site of battle between Ish-Ba'al's men and Dawid's men (P71,1).

Measurement Hill, Giyah: Site where peace is made between Abner and Yo'ab (P71,1).

Be'erot: Hometown of Ish-Ba'al's murderers, Rekab and Ba'anah Rimonsson (P73).

Traditions about Dawid's time in the service of Sha'ul

There are only three stories about Dawid during his service to Sha'ul that are tied to geographical locations—the story of his killing of Golyath, and the story of his flight to Shmu'el, and the story of his flight to Nob. The other stories about Dawid set during this time—his relationship with Yonathan, his military exploits, and his becoming the king's son-in-law—do not mention place names. See map on page 207 for the locations listed below.

Beth-Lehem: Site where Shmu'el anoints Dawid (P34-P35). Dawid's home town (P38).

Sokoh, Azaqah, Ephes-Dammim, Terebrinth Valley: Locations associated with Golyath's taunting of Yisra'elite troops (P37).

Terebrinth Valley: Location of Yisra'elite troops visited by Dawid (P39).

Gath, Eqron, Gay': Locations of fighting between Yisra'elites and Philishtines after death of Golyath (P40,5).

Yerushalem: Location where Dawid takes Golyath's head (P40,5).

Ramah: Location where Dawid seeks refuge with Shmu'el (P44,3). Location where Sha'ul is possessed by divine spirits (P44,4).

Nob: Location of a temple to Yahweh where Dawid seeks provisions from Ahimelek the priest (P49-50).

Traditions about Dawid's time in the southern wilderness

The principal author of Shmu'el seems to have had access to a rich body of stories about Dawid's time in the wilderness living as an outlaw. These stories likely were preserved in Hebron and the areas to its immediate south. The extensive dialogue found in the stories of Dawid's encounters with Sha'ul and in the story of Dawid's marriage to Abigail are almost certainly the entire creation of our author. See map on page 207 for the locations listed below.

Mitspah in Mo'ab: Location where Dawid shelters his parents with the king of Mo'ab (P51).

Hareth Woods, Edulam Cave: Locations of Dawid's hide-outs when fleeing from Sha'ul (P51-P51,1).

Gib'ah: Site of Sha'ul's and Do'eg's slaughter of the priesthood of Nob (P51,2-P51,6).

Qe'ilah: Location where Dawid and his band attacks the Philistines (P51,9).

Horshah, Hekilah, Ziph wilderness, Eyn-Gedi: Locations of Dawid's hide-outs in the wilderness (P51,14-P51,16).

Ma'on (south end of Yeshimon Wasteland): Site where Dawid evaded capture by Sha'ul (P51,16). Home of Nabal the Karmelite and Abigail Nabal of Karmel's wife (P53).

Mountain Goat Cliffs: Near Eyn-Gedi; site of cave where Dawid steals the corner of Sha'ul's robe (P51,18).

Pa'ran wilderness: Location where Dawid and his men camped (P52,1).

Karmel: Location of pastures for Nabal's flocks and herds (P53). Site where Nabal insults Dawid's men, and where Abigail meets with and wins mercy from Dawid (P53-P53,1).

Hekilah Valley: Part of the Ziph wilderness. Location of one of Dawid's hide-outs and where Dawid and Abishai steal into Sha'ul's camp (P53,2).

Gath: Philistine town where Dawid and his men and their families take refuge to escape from Sha'ul (P57).

Tsiqlag: Town given by Akish king of Gath to Dawid (P57,1). Raided and burned by Amaleqites, with families of Dawid and his men taken captive (P62,3). Location where Dawid receives news of Sha'ul's death (P66).

Gesher, Gezer, Amaleq, Olam, Shur, Qeyn, Yerahma'el: Towns and regions raided by Dawid and his men while in the service of Akish (P58).

Besor River: Site associated with Dawid's pursuit of Amaleqites (P62,4-P62,5).

Traditions about Dawid as king

The stories about Dawid as king are centered in Yerushalem and its immediate vicinity. A number of stories set in this time period—those about Dawid's wars against foreign adversaries and about the end of Abshalom's rebellion—are set across Yarden River. See map on page 208 for the locations listed below.

Hebron: Town where Dawid resides when made king of Yehudah (P69). Birth of Dawid's children (P71,2). Dawid holds feast for Abner (P72,3). Abner murdered and buried there (P72,3). Execution of the Rimonssohn brothers (P73,1). Dawid made king of Yisra'el (P74). Abshalom given permission to go there to fulfill vow (P95). Base for Abshalom's rebellion (P96).

Beth-Lehem: Town where Asah-el was buried (P71,1).

Gib'on: Site of Asah-el's death at the hands of Abner (P71,1). Site of Amasa's death at the hands of Yo'ab (P100,9).

Yerushalem and near vicinity: Dawid moves royal seat to (P74,1). Dawid builds palace in (P75). Dawid takes wives and has children in (P75,1). Abshalom burns Yo'ab's fields (P93). Mephiba'al's audience with Dawid after Dawid's return to power (P99,21). Dawid returns to palace (P100,6).

–Dawidstown: Location in Yerushalem where battle-chest resides (P79).

–Wadi Qidron, Beth-HamMerhoq, Mount Olive: Locations near Yerushalem on Dawid's flight (P96-P96,3).

–Bahurim: Site where Mikal's husband Palti'el sent back home (P72,3). Village where Shim'i Gera'sson curses Dawid (P96,4). Where Yehonathan and Ahima'ats hide in a cistern (P99,2).

–Ayephim: Site where Dawid stops to rest on flight from Yerushalem (P97).

–Eyn-Rogel: Site where Yehonathan and Ahima'ats wait for news (P99,2).

Yarden River: Crossed by Dawid and his followers on his flight from Abshalom (P99,3). Crossed by Abshalom in his pursuit of Dawid (P99,4). Crossed by Dawid on his return to Yerushalem to reassume the throne (P99,18; P100,1-P100,2).

Repha'im Valley, Ba'al-Paratsim: Sites of battles against Philishtines (P76-P78).

Ba'aley-Yehudah (=Qiryath-Ye'arim), Gib'ah: Location of Yahweh's battle-chest (P79).

Uzza's Outburst: Location where Uzza was killed by the battle-chest (P79).

Metheg: Capital city of Philishtines, attacked by Dawid (P82).

Mo'ab, Aram, River Perath, Betah, Berothay: Regions/sites east and northeast of the Yarden river where Dawid won victories over foreign enemies (P82).

Edom, Ammon, Amaleq: Regions/sites south and southeast of Yehudah where Dawid won victories over foreign enemies (P82,1).

Lo-Debar: Location of Mephi-Ba'al's house (P82,2).

Ammonite region: Dawid sends delegation to (P83). Site of battle between Dawid's forces and Kings of Ammon and Aram (P83).

Yeriho: Delegation recovers in (P83).

Yarden River, Helam: Locations of battle between Dawid and Aram (P83,1).

Rabbah: Besieged by Dawid's forces (P84, P86).

Ba'al-Hatsor: Location of Abshalom's flocks of sheep (P88).

Theqo'ah: Hometown of wise woman (P90,1).

Geshur: Site of Abshalom's exile (P90; P92,1).

Gil'ad region: Location where Abshalom and his forces camped (P99,4).

Mahanayim: Dawid's base from which he receives supplies for his forces (P99). Location from which Dawid's forces engage those of Abshalom (P99,5).

Ephrayim woods: Site of battle between Dawid's forces and Abshalom's (P99,8).

King's Valley: Location of Abshalom's memorial stele (P99,8).

Gilgal: Where Dawid is met by Yehudeans on his return and crosses the Yarden (P99,18). District Dawid travels through with Kimham on return to Yerushalem (P100,3).

Giloh: Hometown of Ahitophel (P96). Where he commits suicide (P99,3).

Abelah Beth-Ma'akah: Town besieged by Yo'ab during Sheba Bikriysson's rebellion (P100,10-P101).

Locations in the supplemental material to Shmu'el

The stories and material added to Shmu'el after the original "publication" of Deuteronomistic History are set in locations that should be familiar to the reader from the stories about Dawid in the original edition of Shmu'el. The only new location mentioned in the supplemental material is the town of Hayyah.

Gib'on: Site where Sha'ul's descendants sacrificed (P101,4).

Yabesh-Gil'ad: Site from which Dawid moved the remains of Sha'ul and Yehonathan to rebury them in Binyaminite territory (P101,4).

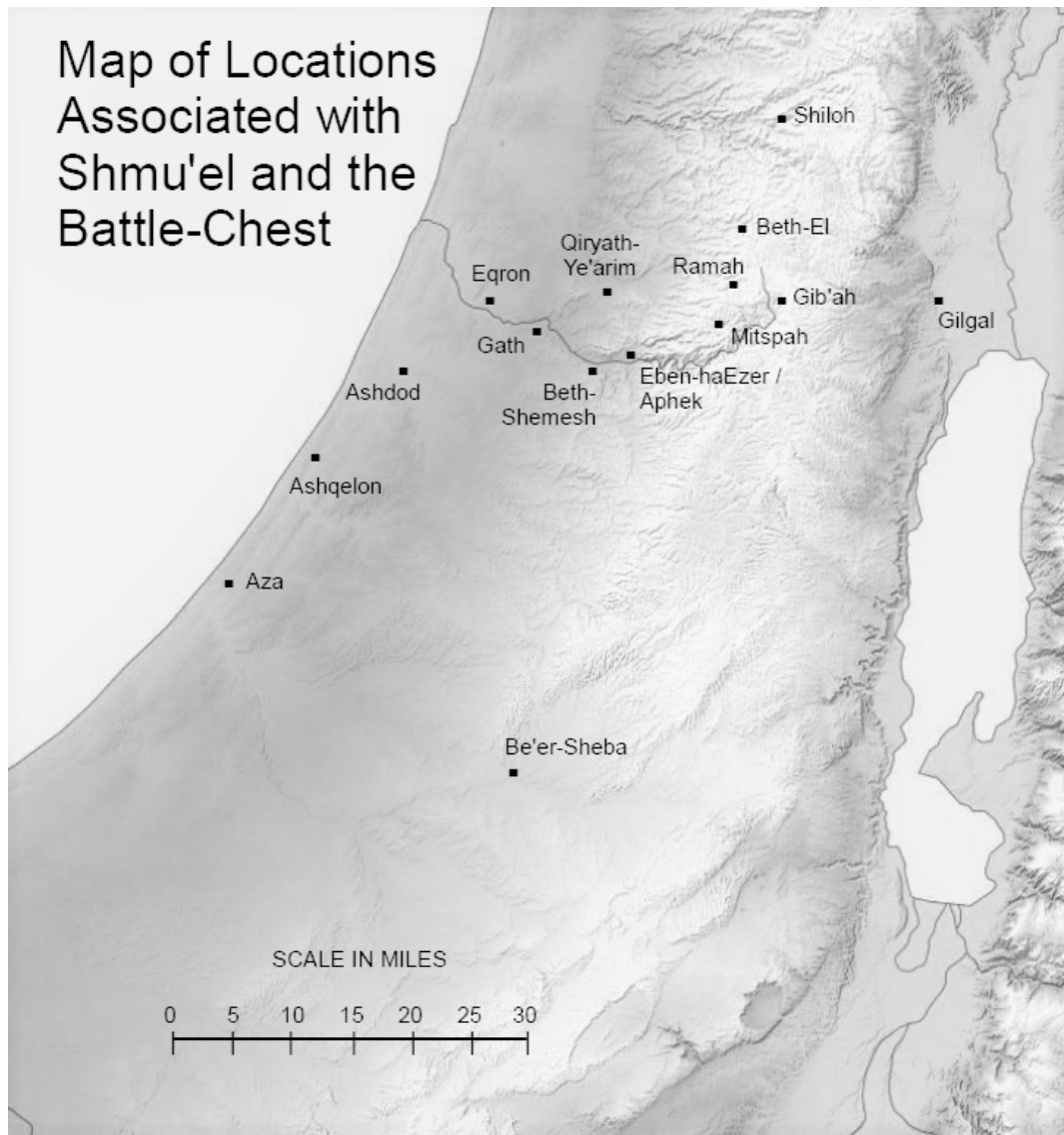
Benjamin region: Sha'ul and Yonathan and Sha'ul's descendants buried there (P101,4).

Nob, Gob, Gath: Sites of battles during the Philishtine wars (P102-P103,2).

Hayyah: Site of battle during Philishtine wars (P106,2).

Repha'im Valley, Adullam Cave, Beth-Lehem: Sites of battles during the Philishtine wars (P106,3-P106,4).

Yerushalem: Where Dawid orders census of Yisra'el to be taken (P107,1).



Map of Locations Associated with Sha'ul

